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JACK SHELBY

A STORY OF THE INDIANA BACKWOODS

BY

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

AUTHOR OF "THE BALE MARKED CIRCLE X," "CAMP VENTURE,"
"THE LAST OF THE FLAT-BOATS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. PICKNELL



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JACK SHELBY.

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PREFACE

I am indebted to Mr. SMILEY FOWLER, a promising young artist and writer, of Clifty, Indiana, for many courtesies in connection with this book. He has taken a good deal of trouble to aid me in verifying my own recollections of Clifty Creek and the region round about,—recollections that are now more than half a century old.

I here record my grateful appreciation of his kindness.

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON.



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JACK SHELBY

CHAPTER I

Trouble Ahead

THE road, beside which the great, lumbering, canvas-covered wagon had been drawn up for the night, was scarcely more than a trail through the dense beech forest. Indiana was young in the year 1838. Most of the comparatively few people then living in the new state had their homes along the Ohio river, which afforded the only outlet to a market for farm products, and the only easy means of communication with the outer world. There was not a mile of railroad in all the state at that time or for some years afterward. Out here in the woods, fifty or sixty miles away from the Ohio river, the population was very sparse, but there was a good deal of travel at times, on horseback and in wagons, because little by little enterprising men were moving into the interior to make homes for themselves where land was at once very rich and very cheap.

But nothing like good roads had been made there. There were nothing more than rude trails through the woods, made by cutting away strips of timber and driving wagons or riding horses over the spaces thus opened. Nothing whatever had been done to make these primitive roads passable. Not even a plow had run a furrow upon either side of the track by way of affording drainage, and so in rainy seasons the roads, wherever they crossed low-lying stretches of land, became mere quagmires.

The Shelby boys, in their journey northward, had come upon such a low-lying part of the road—where it crossed a “bottom land,” with a creek running through it.

They had stopped an hour or so before nightfall, unhitched and fed their four stout horses and built a fire, for their clothes were wet and, early as it was in the Autumn, the night promised to be cool. Moreover they were hungry after an all-day tramp, and supper must be cooked.

The oldest of the four Shelby boys, commonly addressed as “Jack,” though his full name was Andrew Jackson Shelby, had gone forward on foot to examine the bad road ahead of them while the others should curry the horses and get the supper ready. He had been gone now for nearly two hours, and the night had fallen, rendering everything out-

side the circle of firelight as black as pitch. The boys were beginning to grow uneasy concerning their brother.

"I wish Jack would turn up about now," said the youngest boy, Pike, peering into the inky darkness into which the road seemed to plunge headlong as it left the circle of the firelight. "I'm hungry, for one."

"So am I," answered both the others in a breath, "and besides—" added De Kalb, but he paused at that point leaving the sentence unfinished.

"Besides what?" queried Pike, who did not quite like his brother's tone of seeming uneasiness.

"Oh, nothing. I was only thinking."

"But what were you thinking?"

"Why, you know this part of the country hasn't any too good a name. A good many travelers through these parts have been robbed, and some of them have disappeared altogether, particularly those who carried money and stopped over night at a roadside tavern like the one we passed this afternoon."

"Why I should think men would be safe at a tavern."

"Not if the tavern-keeper happens to be a member of the gang that does the robbing. A good many men have slept at a tavern in this part of the

country only to find their money and their horses gone when they waked next morning. But that isn't the usual way. Usually when a man who carries money stops at a tavern, two or three other men come to the place a little later and put up for the night. They pretend to be strangers in these parts, and sometimes they pretend to be anxious lest they should fall in with the highwaymen who are known to prowl around here. In that way they get the real stranger alarmed, and the whole company decide to travel together next day for the sake of safety. In such a case the traveler is very lucky if he loses nothing more than his horse and his money in some lonely part of the road. Many a man robbed in that way has been glad to walk back, and many another hasn't come back at all."

"Is it so bad as that?" asked Decatur.

"Yes, I've often heard our father tell of an experience of his own out here. But he didn't fall into the trap. He watched his men and at the right moment he used his rifle, and then put spurs to his horse. Afterwards the man he had wounded got well, was arrested and sent to the penitentiary. But he never would tell who his partners in the crime were, and so the gang never has been broken up. But all the sheriffs of all the counties in this part of the state are after the desperadoes now, and as a

result their operations have to be carried on far more cautiously than they used to be. Still——”

“There he comes!” exclaimed Pike, who at that moment caught a glimmer of lantern light far down the road in the direction from which Jack was expected.

“Good!” exclaimed De Kalb. “Take up the supper, Decatur, Jack has had a hard tramp through the mud, and must be very hungry.”

“I reckon one word of that is for Jack and two for yourself, Kab.” The boy De Kalb was always called “Kab” for short just as Decatur was usually called “Cate.”

“Maybe so. Anyhow we’re all as hungry as wolves, so hurry up the supper.”

A little later the elder brother, Jack, came into the circle of firelight. He was a tall, slender but powerful youth of perhaps nineteen or twenty, with a physique like an Indian’s—all bone and muscle—and with eyes of blue, but so deep-set as to seem almost black. His brothers, when he approached, began instantly to ply him with questions, but he answered none of them, not because he was surly—for he was never that—but because he was excessively weary. Instead of answering he opened the door of his lantern and blew out the candle within it.

The lantern was a great cylinder of tin about a foot long and perhaps six inches in diameter. The tin was punched full of holes arranged in ornamental patterns. These holes were to let the light through, a service which they rendered rather feebly. But such lanterns were the only ones in use at that time in the west, where articles made of glass were very few and costly. The great size of a tin lantern was a matter of necessity. If such a lantern had been made smaller the candle within would have heated the tin so much as to melt the tallow, and candles were scarce in those days.

"It's going to be a tough job but we must manage it," said Jack at last, after he had swallowed some coffee from a pint tin cup, and devoured some rashers of bacon with a few mouthfuls of ash-cake, while Decatur was filling his tin plate with fried apples.

"Tell us about it?" urged one of the boys.

"There isn't much to tell. The stretch of road before us is about three miles long and I should say nearly a hundred miles deep."

As he spoke he looked down at his boots that came to his knees and that were scarcely visible now through the mud that thickly plastered them. "But, as good luck will have it, there isn't any clay in the soil to mire the horses. It's just plain, simple, black

mud. It'll make fine cornfields some day when somebody drains it with ditches. But just now it's a nuisance. It'll make us a day or so later than we expected in getting to the end of our journey, and it will keep us longer than I like in this ill-reputed region," he concluded.

"How shall we manage to get through?" asked Pike, who, being a boy who had just begun his teens, was specially impatient to finish the journey and begin the new, wild life that lay before the little company of youthful pioneers.

"Well, you see, there is only a stretch of about three miles of this creek bottom——"

"*Only* three miles?" answered Decatur. "Well, judging from what it has done to your boots, I reckon the horses will think three miles of it enough, by the time they have hauled our big wagon-load of plunder over it."

"They simply *can't* haul that load across," said Jack.

"Then what are we to do?"

"Why we must give them a lighter load of course. My plan is to unload about half our things here, and see if the horses can't pull the other half through the mud. If they can do that we'll unload when we reach solid ground again, come back with the empty wagon, and get the rest of our things. Then when we

get them all to firm ground on the other side of the creek, we'll load up again and go on. But it will take us all of to-morrow, and perhaps longer to get across."

"What if we find the horses can't haul even half the load?"

"In that case, we'll have to lighten again wherever we get stalled, and so make an extra trip or part of one."

"Well," said De Kalb, meditatively, "I never expected we'd be stalled by mud at this season of the year."

"Neither did I," answered Jack, "and nine years in ten we shouldn't be. But this year, as you know, we've had a very wet summer, and now the Fall rains have set in two or three weeks before their time. After any ordinary summer all this country would be as dry as a bone at this season, and as for the creeks they would be nothing more than spring branches. But this creek ahead of us has actually been over its banks within a few days past and all the bottom land is a mass of soft muck. Fortunately the creek has gone down again now, and the ford is pretty good. The water won't come above the bottom of the wagon body. I wish I could be sure the mud wouldn't."

"Are there any more creek bottoms to be crossed after this one?" asked Decatur.

"No, I think not. I was only fifteen years old when I came out here with father, to locate the land, but I remember this creek very well. So far as I can remember, it is all high ground beyond this, so if we get over our present difficulty, we'll have plain sailing the rest of the way."

"S'pose it should come on to rain again before we get across!" said Pike uneasily.

"My dear Pike," said the elder brother, "you must remember that we're not out on a pleasure trip. We must expect a lot of trouble and hard work and difficulty, and we've simply got to meet whatever comes. I don't think it is going to rain to-night or to-morrow. If it does it will simply mean more difficulty and more hard work and more delay, and we must be ready to do our best, whatever happens. Now it is time to arrange things for morning and then we'll go to sleep. We must get an early start. Up at the first streak of daylight, is the word. But we mustn't all sleep at once to-night or any night till we get to Greensburg. If we did we might get up in the morning and find our horses gone, together with our provisions and a good many other things. We must have some one on guard all night. You, Pike, can take the first

turn, as it's easier to stay up a little late than it is to get up out of sleep."

"I'm no baby, Jack, if I am the youngest boy in the lot," said Pike indignantly." "I'm not asking for the easiest part of any job that I'm strong enough to do as well as the rest."

"Good for you, Pike!" answered his brother. "You'll be a man yet before your mother is, and we all count on you to do your share. But somebody must take the first turn, and it may as well be you as anybody. You must carry the old musket. Is it loaded?"

"Yes, with bird shot."

"Draw the load then, and load it with slugs. You must walk about all the time with the musket over your shoulder, and must watch the wagon and the horses in particular. If anybody meddles with them, use your gun. That'll wake the rest of us and we'll be with you. I'll sleep with the rifle by my side, and Kab and Cate will have the shot-guns. Load them with buckshot, boys, and see that you have good caps on the nipples. Here, Pike, take my watch, and wake Kab at about eleven. He can stand guard till one. Then he must wake me, and I'll stay on post till three o'clock—as that's the worst watch of the night. I'll wake Cate about

three and he'll wake all of us a little after four. Now, silence in camp!"

With that the three older boys wrapped themselves in their rough Indian blankets and stretched themselves on the ground before the fire, while Pike went over to the wagon and the horses, with the musket over his shoulder.

The gun was a very old-fashioned thing, which the father of these boys had carried in the war of 1812-15, when he was himself only a boy, and had used with effect at the battle of New Orleans. It had a very large bore, which would take a round ball of more than a half-ounce in weight. It was now often used as a shotgun with buckshot for deer and large game or with smaller shot for ducks, squirrels and birds. On the present occasion it was loaded with slugs—irregularly-shaped blocks of lead, which at short range were sure to be effective. It had a flint lock. That is to say the hammer on the side of the gun was armed with a flint, so placed that when the trigger was pulled the descending hammer scraped the flint along a roughened surface of steel, opening the "pan" and showering sparks into the powder placed there as a "priming." This powder "pan," was connected by a small hole with the charge of powder in the gun itself, so that whenever the trigger was pulled the gun was promptly dis-

charged. It was with just this kind of guns that the revolutionary war was fought, and in the war of 1812--15 most of the American soldiers were armed with such muskets. Some of the Kentuckians and Tennesseans in that war, carried rifles instead of muskets, but the rifles also had flint locks, as percussion caps did not come into use until about the year 1820.

The Shelby boys had, besides the old war musket, two double-barreled shotguns and a Kentucky squirrel rifle. These guns were a necessary part of their equipment, not for defense particularly, as they did not expect to need defense after reaching their destination, but as a means of procuring food in the backwoods where they hoped to establish a home and where, for a year at least, they must depend mainly upon game for their supply of meat.

The shotguns were ordinary, muzzle-loading guns, with percussion locks. The rifle was very long, very heavy and exceedingly accurate in its fire, as all such rifles were in that time and country. Round bullets were used in it, each pushing down a bit of greased rag, called a "patch," as it was driven from the muzzle of the gun to the powder charge below.

Thus armed, the boys felt amply able to take care of themselves, even while passing through a

region known to be infested at that time with highwaymen and horse thieves. Their only danger was that of surprise, and, as we have seen, they provided against that by keeping a sentinel always on duty, and by having their guns—which they knew how to use with effect,—always at hand.

There was still another member of the party who was always on duty as an alert sentinel. This was their dog. Jack, who had begun to study Latin had named the faithful fellow "Nemo," which means "nobody," but Nemo stood always ready to prove himself somebody whenever need should arise. He was of mixed breed—half bulldog and half bloodhound—about the best cross possible for use in a frontier settlement. Such dogs combined the fierce hunting instinct of the bloodhound with the strength, courage and faithfulness of the bulldog. They were equally good in trailing game, in watching their owners' possessions and in doing battle for their masters in case of need.

On this occasion, with the instinct of the watchdog, Nemo wandered back and forth between the wagon and the fire where the boys were sleeping, as if the entire camp had been in his charge, and without doubt he would have made it extremely uncomfortable for any intruder if any such had approached during the night.

CHAPTER II

The Who and Why of the Shelby Boys

THE father of these four boys had been a soldier under Jackson at the battle of New Orleans. When the war was over and he received his discharge he was only about seventeen or eighteen years of age, but he was tall and strong as Western boys were apt to be, and he had learned to be self-reliant during his service as a soldier.

As a reward for that service, the government had given him a land warrant, authorizing him to "take up" a considerable tract of land and make it his own. He could "locate" his claim on any wild land that the government owned anywhere. That is to say he could choose the land for himself and make it his own property by registering it in a government land-office.

About that time Indiana was admitted to the Union as a new state. As its soil was rich, as most of it belonged to the government, and as the state promised to become quickly prosperous, a great tide of immigration began to flow into it. Men going

into the state could buy government land for the merest trifle, and by industry and energy convert the wild forest tracts into valuable farms, thus growing well-to-do from the increase in the value of the land, while living comfortably on the crops they were growing upon it.

Young Shelby, who lived in Kentucky at that time, decided to avail himself of this chance. He had inherited a small property in his native state, including a few negroes. He sold this Kentucky farm, and crossed the Ohio River into Indiana, taking his negroes with him into the free state and thus setting them free, as many other Kentuckians did. Most of the negroes remained with him as hired help, so that his surroundings in the new home were not greatly different from those to which he had been accustomed.

He "located" his land warrant on the banks of the Ohio river near the little Swiss vineyard village of Vevay. With what money he had from the sale of his Kentucky property, he bought other large tracts of government land adjoining his own, and being a thrifty, shrewd and tirelessly energetic young fellow, he soon made himself the most prosperous young man in all the region round about. A log cabin sufficed him to live in during the first two years after his removal to Indiana, but at

the end of that time, he set to work to build himself a permanent home, of the native stone which was abundant in the river hills.

It was to this comfortable home that he took his bride when, a few years later, he married the highly educated young schoolmistress in Vevay.

As children were born to him—four boys and four girls in all—he planned to provide abundantly for their future. They must have the best education to be secured in the West and meantime the father was busily adding to his acres not only near his farm but wherever else he saw a prospect of future prosperity. He bought many soldiers' land warrants, with which he took up government lands. Other government lands he bought directly of the land-office agents until at middle age he found himself the largest landholder and the most influential citizen in all the region round about. From the beginning he had been a planter of fruit orchards, and he had developed several new and superior varieties of apples that bore his name.

He was, in short, a typical American of that sturdy, courageous kind which the West seemed to produce spontaneously like weeds in a rich soil. He was intensely patriotic, and he was not ashamed of his Americanism.

As a veteran of the war of 1812, and one who had

fought the British at New Orleans, he named his oldest son Andrew Jackson, his second De Kalb, his third Decatur and his fourth Pike.

In 1837—a year before the beginning of this story—this strong, active man of the West died suddenly. His estate was regarded as one of the richest in all that region, and it was so in fact at that time. The lands belonging to it were rapidly rising in value, and the only debt upon the estate was insignificant in comparison. It was a debt contracted in the purchase of additional land.

Unfortunately in 1837 a great financial panic swept over the country and was followed by a period of terrible business depression, particularly in the West. As men of that time expressed it, “the very bottom dropped out” of all values, and especially of land values. Farms that could have been sold at twenty or thirty dollars an acre at the beginning of that year were sold in the Autumn of it for no more than a tenth of that sum. Nobody could pay his debts, and in the general bankruptcy scores and hundreds of farms were thrown upon the market to be sold under the hammer for whatever pittance they would bring. Wild lands could not be sold at all. Sometimes they could not be given away, men deeming them not worth even a year’s taxes.

Thus within a few months after the death of this

prosperous man, it was found difficult to sell off his great land-holdings for enough to discharge the comparatively small debt with which they were burdened.

The mother of the Shelby boys was a brave, resolute woman, however, and she determined that if her children could not begin life with means of their own, at any rate they should not begin it with a burden of debt upon their young shoulders. She sold everything she could. She gave up property in payment of debts, and she managed all so wisely that within less than a year she found herself pretty well stripped of property indeed, but entirely free of debt of any kind.

Then she and her boys took account of things. There remained to them, as the sum total of their possessions, a few farm horses, a few cows and hogs, a little household furniture and a very small sum of money. There remained also one other possession —a square mile of entirely wild woodland out on Clifty Creek in Decatur county. The good mother had not been able to sell that undeveloped land in a very sparsely settled region for even the smallest price.

“Very well,” said Jack, speaking for all four of the boys. “That’s a square mile of opportunity, and we’ll see what we can make out of it.”

There was a note of determination in his voice, and a look of determination in the faces of the others—for this project had been carefully discussed and settled among the boys—but they uttered no boasts of what they would do, and made no promises.

It was decided that the mother should take her old place at the head of the Vevay school with her oldest daughter, Janey, as her assistant. The two younger girls should keep house for them. The boys had decided to go to Decatur county and see what they could do with their “square mile of opportunity.”

The boys at once moved their mother and sisters to the village. They sold off the few remaining hogs and added their price to the mother’s little store of money. They sold all the cows but one. That one they reserved for their mother and sisters. Then they loaded the great farm wagon with the farming implements that remained to them, and with such other things as they felt it absolutely necessary to buy. For their buying they had a little money of their own—money which they had earned by hard work during the year it had required to settle the estate. They spent this as sparingly as possible, knowing that they would have need of it in their new home.

“It is Fall now,” Jack had said, “and it will be a

year before we can have any crops to sell. We must save what we can of our money for emergencies, and we must look out for chances to earn more now and then. Even out in that wild country there may be opportunities of that sort."

They had four stout farm horses to draw their wagon and to serve them afterwards. They had plows, axes, hoes, tools and the like. To these they added a barrel of New Orleans molasses, half a dozen sides of bacon, some dry salt pork, a little coffee, two or three bags of corn meal, a large bag of salt, some cooking utensils, and a number of wedges and frows. They took enough corn with them to feed the horses during the journey but there wasn't a stick of furniture of any description included in the outfit.

"When we begin to grow rich and luxurious, we'll make our own chairs, tables, bedsteads and such things," said De Kalb, who was the best mechanic in the party. "At present we shan't need such things. A log will do for a table, a rock for a chair and as for beds, I suppose, Jack, the ground out there isn't any harder than it is here."

Jack laughed, for answer. Each boy carried a pint tin cup attached to his belt, and there were half a dozen tin plates in the rear end of the wagon. Each boy had his jack-knife, of course, which would

answer all purposes at meals as well as elsewhere.

There was one large water-tight box in the wagon which was regarded as a specially valuable possession, to be protected against all dangers. In it were stored several little kegs of gunpowder, two hundred boxes of percussion caps, many half-pound bars of lead with which to make bullets, several bags of shot of different sizes, and everything else that related to their guns. The guns themselves were carried over the boys' shoulders, and each had his powder horn, shot pouch and game bag strapped to his person.

On the way they killed as many squirrels as they could eat, and one day Pike, who was a specially good shot and an eager sportsman, managed to get eight or ten quails, or "partridges" as those birds were always called in Southern Indiana.

At the time of their halt by the roadside where we first found them, however, they had no game for their supper, and were compelled to draw upon their supplies in the wagon for that meal. This was because they had traveled in pretty deep mud all that day, and had been kept busy aiding the horses to drag the heavy wagon over the difficult road. Moreover it had been drizzling rain all day, so that there was no game within sight as they toiled along the miserable highway.

The weather had cleared when they stopped for the night about four o'clock, and Jack, fearing the trouble ahead, had set out to walk through the creek bottoms on a tour of inspection. We know what report he brought back when, after dark, he returned to the fire.

CHAPTER III

A Division of Force

WHEN morning came there was a hurried breakfast, and the work of lightening the wagon's load was begun at once. A good deal of discretion was necessary in deciding what to unload and what to leave in the wagon for its first trip.

"We can't tell," explained Jack, "how long the two parts of our cargo will remain separated. I hope to make both trips to-day and camp to-night on the high ground beyond the creek, but that is very uncertain."

"I should say it was," answered De Kalb. "The three trips, there and back and there again, will make nine or ten miles in all, and I for one don't believe the horses can do it over such a road."

"Anyhow," said Jack, we must prepare for all the possibilities. On this first trip we'll leave Pike behind to guard the things we leave here. The rest of us will be needed to help lift the wagon out of the muddiest places. Pike can't do as much at that as we bigger fellows can, but with the musket he can

guard our things here, till the wagon gets back. Now, there's another thing. One or the other of you two will have to stay with the first load on the other side while we come back for the rest of the stuff. We'll let Kab do that, and you and I, Cate, will come back with the wagon. Then on the second trip there will be you and Pike and myself to help with the wagon, and we shan't be quite as strong a team as we are on the first trip. So I think we'd better take considerably more than half the things,—half by weight, I mean—at the first load, leaving a lighter load for the next trip."

"That's all right and reasonable, Jack," said Pike; "but it isn't what you set out to say. I wish you'd come back to that. You see it might be important."

"You're right, Pike," answered the elder brother. "It's a bad habit of mine to start to say one thing and run off into something else. What I started to say is that as we don't know how long we'll be divided into two parties, we must so divide the necessary things as to leave each party provided and independent of the other."

"Is that all?" asked Pike. "Well you're very late in thinking about it. I fixed all that last night while I was on guard."

"How do you mean, Pike?"

"Why I divided the things. I took one skillet and a frying pan out of the wagon, and left the others in. I took out a piece of bacon and some meal and some salt and a little coffee, and left the rest in the wagon. There's only one coffee pot, you know, and I thought it would be a pity to dull an ax by chopping that in two. Besides it wouldn't be good for the coffee pot, so I decided that whoever should be left behind must either make his coffee in his tin cup or go without."

"It was thoughtful of you to save time in that way," said Kab, "but now suppose you don't waste it all in talking. Hitch up the horses while we get the things out."

Pike, whose spirits were always of the best, laughed and obeyed, and before the sun was half an hour high the wagon started on its journey. But just as it pulled out of the camp, a hame string broke and the horse wearing it, very nearly pulled himself out of his harness. Pike, seeing the nature of the mishap, ran to the wagon and was about to spring in when Jack stopped him.

"Never mind that, Pike. The rawhide is under a lot of other things and we won't wait for it. Get me one of those paw-paw bushes instead."

There was a little clump of low bushes growing in an open space not far from the road. They

looked like paw-paws and Pike, supposing them to be such, had searched among them the evening before, hoping to find some ripe paw-paws on them. He could not imagine what use Jack could make of a paw-paw bush when what he needed was a thong of rawhide for a hame string. But without stopping to ask questions, he hurried to the little patch, seized one of the bushes and undertook to break it off. The woody part of it snapped easily, just as a paw-paw bush does, but the bark held stoutly against all Pike's tugging. He tried to twist it in two, but without the smallest success. Not even the slenderest fiber of the strangely tough bark would give way.

"Cut it" shouted one of the other boys, and Pike obeyed. His knife severed it at a stroke, and the bewildered boy hurried to the wagon with it. Jack peeled off a strip of the bark, inserted it in the loops of the hames, drew it firmly together and tied it. Then he started the horses again, calling back:

"That's leather-wood, Pike. Suppose you study it a little while we are gone, and learn to tell it from paw-paw when you see it again."

Pike did as his brother suggested. Cutting down one of the bushes, he went over to the smoldering fire, and began a minute examination of the shrub.

"That's a lesson for me," he said, talking to himself. "The bushes did look like paw-paws at a

distance, but when I looked closer yesterday, I ought to have seen that they were nothing of the kind. The leaves are different and the shape of the bush is different when I look closely. Well, that's a good one, and I suppose I'll never hear the last of it. A boy brought up in the country who doesn't know a paw-paw bush! Of course I never saw leather-wood before, and I couldn't know what this was till somebody told me, but I ought to have seen that it wasn't a paw-paw. It all means that I ought to look at things more carefully, and I will hereafter."

Then he peeled off several strips of the bark and examined them. Taking one of a proper width to serve as a hame string, he fastened it to a tree limb, and hung his entire weight by it.

"It's good for hame strings, sure enough," he said, "and it's as soft and limber as a piece of yarn, so it's easy to tie."

He next divided a piece, by splitting—for it split with entire ease—into slender cords about the size of a shoe-string. These, he found, were still nearly unbreakable, though he tugged at them with all his might.

"Well I'll know where to get strings when I want them," he muttered, "if these leather-wood bushes grow at the new Shelby place, and I suppose they do, as that's not very far away, I shouldn't

wonder if the Indians used this leather-wood bark for bow strings."

In that conjecture Pike was right. The Indians used the bark in question not only for bow strings, but for all other purposes that required cord of any kind. Sometimes they used very small strips of it as a sort of thread with which to sew their moccasins or as strings upon which to thread beads.

While Pike was amusing himself as best he could and guarding the pile of goods by the roadside, and collecting a supply of dry wood for use later in the day, his brothers were slowly making their way through the deep mud. The work was very hard indeed upon the horses. Strong as they were, they could not drag the wagon very far at a time without halting to rest and recover their breath.

These haltings brought a new difficulty. The moment the wagon stopped, the wheels began sinking deeper and deeper into the mud, so that when the time for starting again came the horses had well-nigh to exhaust their strength in order to set the vehicle in motion anew.

"This will never do!" exclaimed De Kalb at the second halt. "If this sort of thing goes on, the horses won't be able to pull the hat off your head an hour hence."

"What can we do, Kab?" asked Jack, who enter-

The two hurriedly cut a large number of branches from the trees and spread them in the road.—*Page 29.*



tained a well-deserved opinion of De Kalb's ingenuity in finding a way out of difficulties. "We simply *must* breathe the horses, and we do our best with our poles at the wheels to help them start again."

For answer, De Kalb went to the wagon and took out two axes.

"Here, Cate," he said, handing his brother one of the axes, "come along quick."

With that he led the way forward to about the point where the next halt must be made. There the two hurriedly cut a large number of branches from the trees and spread them in the road. When the wagon came up it was halted on this pavement or mat of tree branches, and rested easily there without sinking into the mud at all. As soon as Kab saw that his device was successful, he hurried forward again with Decatur for company, and repeated the operation.

Still the progress of the wagon between the stopping places was very slow, and the work was extremely hard upon the horses.

"Tell you what, Jack," Kab called out at the third or fourth halt. "Cate and I will go forward and not only prepare halting-places for the wagon, but pave all the worst places with brush in this way, so as to ease the hauling between stops.

We can do a lot in that way and if anything breaks down or you need us in any way you can fire a gun and we'll hurry back."

Jack saw not only that the plan was a good one but that it was absolutely necessary to do something of the kind if the journey was to be accomplished at all.

The two boys were skilled in the use of the axe and could cut off branches of considerable size with a single stroke. Beginning about a hundred yards in advance of the wagon they scattered branches over the track as they went, not trying to make a firm bed of them except at the halting-places, but laying enough branches all along to give considerable support to the moving wagon and keep its wheels from sinking.

The relief to the horses was very great though their task was still a slow and difficult one. The wagon moved so slowly indeed, that the two boys soon found themselves getting well ahead of it. So at Cate's suggestion they began doing their work more thoroughly, scattering a larger number of the thick branches than before. This indeed was almost a necessity, as they were nearing the creek now, and the mud was growing deeper than ever. By working with all their might they managed to carpet the road so thickly that the horses drew the wagon

over the last quarter mile to the creek, with comparative ease.

But it was after noon when that point was reached and Jack decided that the horses must have a long rest and a good feed before taxing their strength further. The boys too, were extremely tired with wading through the mud and with their work in improving the road. It was determined therefore, to make the ford their halting place for dinner.

As the road approached the creek it crossed a rocky space, and there the wagon was stopped and the weary horses fed. A fire was made, dinner was cooked and eaten, and then the three boys lay down upon the loose stones to rest for an hour before resuming the toilsome journey.

Beyond the creek there was less than a mile to go before reaching firm high ground again, but it was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon when the task was done.

"We can't make another trip to-day," said Jack, reluctantly, as the work of unloading began.

"No, and we can't even go back with the empty wagon to-night," answered De Kalb. "If we did that the horses would be too badly worn out for to-morrow's work. We must stay here till morning."

" You and Jack must," said Cate. " For my part, I'll go back and keep Pike company."

" Oh, Pike isn't afraid, and you are fagged out," answered Jack, persuasively.

" Of course he isn't afraid," said the other boy quickly. " But the worst part of this country is over there south of the creek, and Pike is only a boy. He might be set upon by three or four men at once. So I'm going back as soon as I rest a bit."

" Well," said De Kalb, " I reckon that will be best, but incidentally I beg to remark that if any body attacks Pike over there there'll be work for the coroner to-morrow. Still I wish Nemo had stayed with him instead of coming with us."

" Any how I'm off," called out Decatur as he strode away, with his gun over his shoulder. One of the others called after him urging him to take the lantern with him, but he declined, saying:

" Oh, I'll get there before dark, and you may need the lantern around the horses."

CHAPTER IV

How Pike Passed the Day

THE day was a long and rather dull one for Pike, all alone as he was, there by the roadside in the woods. Fortunately he had remembered to take out of the wagon his slate and his arithmetic, for he had brought all his school-books with him on this journey, determined that his education should not entirely come to an end even if he must go off into the woods where there would probably be neither schools nor schoolmasters. Seating himself by the fire he set to work diligently over some rather difficult problems in "partial payments," and with these he occupied himself till after midday, when hunger reminded him that he must cook and eat what dinner he had. After dinner he did not resume his studies, for the reason that he expected the wagon to arrive at any moment.

Hour after hour went by, however, and no wagon came. At last, as the sun began to sink toward the west, Pike saw clearly that even if the wagon were there, no second trip could be made during that day.

"I must stay here for another night," he said to himself, "and I must get a pile of wood ready, for it promises to be cool, and the boys will be very tired if they come to-night. They must have had a lot of trouble, or they would have got back before this time."

He set to work chopping, and by nightfall had a full supply of fuel piled by the side of the fire. Still nobody came. He cooked and ate his supper alone, feeling, in the meanwhile a good deal of uneasiness lest the wagon had broken down entirely.

"It would be something like a calamity" he reflected, "if we should break an axle or dish a wheel just now. I don't know what we should do if anything like that were to occur. We could go on to Clifty somehow, of course, but we'd have to leave all our things behind. And I'm afraid something of that kind has happened in fact. For certainly—but it's no use worrying, I'll know all about it when the boys get back, and I can't do anything 'about it now. I mustn't cross bridges till I come to them."

He threw fresh logs on the fire, and sat down, thinking of a thousand things, until presently he fell into a doze. Suddenly a noise as of feet among the leaves in the woods just behind him and only a few yards away, aroused him. He instantly rose and faced about, cocking his musket as he did so.

There in the darkness, but with its eyes gleaming with light reflected from the fire, stood a deer which had evidently been attracted by the firelight. For half a second the boy did not know what to do, but his wits quickly came back to him and, hurriedly aiming between the two eyes which glowed like lamps, he fired. The deer fell instantly with scarcely the twitching of a muscle to show that it had ever been alive.

Pike had never shot a deer before, and had never seen one shot, but he had heard enough of deer hunting to know that there is nothing more dangerous than to approach a deer after shooting it and before you are certain that it is dead. Even if it has no horns—and this one was heavily antlered—its hoofs are as sharp as knives, and when wounded it is disposed to use its weapons with strokes that are lightning-like in their suddenness. Sometimes, too, as Pike had often heard, a deer when shot will fall and lie perfectly still for a full minute, and then suddenly rise and run away.

Remembering all these things, Pike stood off and watched the deer while reloading his gun. He had no notion of letting the game escape him for want of a load in his musket. But after a full minute or more had passed and the animal showed no signs of life, the boy opened his big jack-knife, and approach-

ing cautiously, plunged the blade into the great vein of the neck, in order that the carcass might bleed properly. He found his game quite dead, and no wonder, as the heavy charge of slugs had struck the exact center of its forehead, and passed into its brain.

Securing a piece of rope, Pike lashed one end of it to the hind legs of the animal, and, throwing the other end over a limb, managed to hang the deer head downwards, so that it might bleed freely, and so that a little later he might skin and dress it conveniently.

All sleep had gone from his eyes by this time, and all thought of anything but his success in killing his first deer. Over that he was so full of rejoicing that he could not refrain from shouting at the top of his voice. This he did two or three times before he could calm his tingling nerves. And why not? Was he not a wild free boy, out there in the wild free woodlands, where there was nobody to be disturbed by his hallooing?

* * * *

Decatur was a very tired boy when he left his brothers, telling them he would be with Pike long before nightfall. He had not known how weary he was or how stiff his over-taxed muscles were, until he set out to make the return trip. And when he

found out his condition he was sure it would wear off as soon as he should "limber up" by walking. In some degree it did so, but his exhaustion was very great and the struggle over the muddy road was distressingly painful.

After a while he came to a little spring and stopped to drink of it. There happened to be a comparatively dry bank by the spring, and the well-nigh worn out boy decided to rest there for awhile.

"There's plenty of time," he reflected, "and there's no use in hurrying."

So he stretched himself out on the bank, and began watching the leaves above him as they waved about in a gentle breeze. Their motion soothed and rested him until presently he ceased to think of them or of anything else. Decatur Shelby was sound asleep.

When he waked the night had fully fallen, and he could not guess how late it might be.

"It may be midnight," he thought, as he hurriedly started to his feet and resumed his walk. "It may even be later than that, and poor Pike has been standing guard all this time alone. I must hurry."

But it was one thing to resolve to hurry, and quite another thing to hurry in fact, as the boy soon found out. The sky was thickly overcast now, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he could see where the road lay. Several times indeed, he wan-

dered out of it, and found himself running against the big beech trees that grew close together on either side. When that happened he had almost to feel his way back into the wagon track. In the darkness too the walking was much worse than it had been at any time before. He could not see to "pick his way" and his feet plunged into the deepest mud-holes as often as they found better footing.

All the while he was thinking of his young brother, left alone and under the necessity of remaining awake all night in order to keep watch upon the precious stores. Cate had satisfied himself by this time that it must be nearly morning.

After a while he caught a glimpse of Pike's distant fire by the roadside, and just at that moment he was startled by the report of Pike's musket. Excited as his imagination was, he felt sure that there could be but one explanation of the shot. Robbers must have come upon the boy, and what they might do to him before help could come, nobody could tell. Then he heard Pike's shouts, and that convinced him that mischief was going on.

In his frantic eagerness to go to his brother's assistance, Cate tried to run, but the light of the blazing fire ahead blinded him, so that he stumbled and fell headlong into a particularly soft and oozy mud-hole. Struggling up again, but losing his

hat and not stopping to find it, he hurried on, and presently reached the fire.

Pike, hearing his footsteps, turned from his deer and burst out laughing.

"I can't help it, Cate! You'd laugh, too, if you could see yourself, but I'm awfully sorry too. You're not hurt, are you?"

And indeed the spectacle was ludicrous. As seen from the front, Cate's entire person was plastered thick with mud. His face and even his hair had shared in the mud bath, so that it was rather by his form and his attitude than by his features that Pike had recognized him.

"It's all right," answered Cate. "I feel like laughing myself now that I know you're safe. Oh, Pike, you can't imagine how frightened I was about you. That's how I came to fall. I was sure the robbers were upon you, and I tried to come to your rescue as quickly as possible. But why did you shoot? And what were you hallooing about?"

For answer Pike simply pointed at his venison. Cate was prompt and generous in joyful congratulations.

"I'll help you dress it, Pike," he added, "and we'll have a venison breakfast in the morning."

"Well, you'd better get some of the mud off you first," answered the younger boy, beginning to

laugh again. "Shuck off your clothes. I'll bring you some water from the spring, and while you scrub yourself, I'll take a chip and see what I can do in the way of scraping off the mud."

"No, you'd better leave it till it dries. Scraping would simply drive it into the cloth. Let it alone and when it dries it'll come off easily enough."

He stripped to the waist and when Pike set a large pail of water before him he proceeded to scrub the mud off his face, and out of his hair and ears. Between the dousings he managed to explain why the wagon had not returned, and after his face and head were made clean the two set about skinning and dressing the deer—a process which Pike declared ought rather to be called "undressing" it. While this work was going on, Pike told the story of the deer's approach, the shooting, and all the rest of it.

Then he remembered that Decatur had eaten no supper, while his own evening meal had been none too abundant. So even before the work of dressing the animal was done, he cut off some generous slices of the meat and broiled them on the beech-wood coals of the camp-fire. After supper there was a good deal to talk about, of course. Particularly Cate had to explain the difficulties that had been encountered in getting the wagon across the "bad lands" as he called that stretch of muddy road.

and tell his brother of the way in which those difficulties had been met.

"What time do you think the other boys will get here with the wagon in the morning?" asked Pike, in a tone that indicated that some thought lay behind his question.

"Only one of them will come," answered Cate. "That'll be Jack, I suppose, Kab will have to stay and watch the things there. Jack isn't as tired as Kab is, because he was driving, and couldn't help with the very hard work of cutting limbs from the trees and spreading the brush in the road. So I suppose Jack will bring the wagon back and give Kab a chance to rest."

"That's what I was thinking about," said Pike, meditatively.

"What was?"

"Why that you fellows must be dreadfully tired, while I've had a whole day for rest. Now of course you didn't put half enough brush on the road. You couldn't, and so it will be necessary for somebody to put as much more there as possible, and my name's 'somebody.' "

"Oh, as to that," answered Cate, who, in his utter weariness, had stretched himself out before the fire, "you and I will both work at the job as we go along."

The boy spoke as if half asleep and Pike made no answer. He wanted his brother to go to sleep entirely, which, in about half a minute he did.

"Now then," thought Pike, "I've got him off to sleep, and I'll have things my own way. I'll let him sleep all night for he never wakes of himself, and I'll stand guard till morning. If the subject had come up he would have insisted upon taking half the night on himself. Then in the morning, as soon as breakfast is over, I'll start down the road with an ax, leaving him here to mind the things and to help Jack load when he comes. I'll be off as soon as it's light enough to see, and so I'll be an hour or two ahead of the wagon when it starts with the load. I'll give the boys a much better road to travel than they had yesterday."

CHAPTER V

A Perilous Adventure

As Pike was still carrying Jack's watch—a big silver bull's-eye time-piece that had belonged to their father—he did not have to wait for daylight in order to know when to begin getting breakfast. He had it ready, in fact, just as the earliest gray streaks of dawn appeared. Not till then did he wake his brother. Cate was disposed to quarrel in a friendly way with the younger boy for having allowed him to sleep throughout the night, but Pike would not argue the question. Instead of that he insisted upon explaining his plan, and as soon as breakfast was over he shouldered his axe and set out upon the journey.

There was plenty of time, of course, and so the boy did his work thoroughly. He met Jack with the wagon, when he had gone about a mile, and explained to him what he had undertaken to do. As Jack approved, Pike went on, and an hour or so later, he reached the high ground where De Kalb was guarding the first load of goods.

Pike was both hungry and tired. With that thoughtfulness of others which was a marked characteristic of the boy, he had brought with him a large cut of the venison.

"Poor Kab," he had reflected, "hasn't had any fresh meat for two or three days, and he'll be glad of this, for of course the wagon can't get back to him in time for dinner."

De Kalb did indeed rejoice in the sight of the venison, and he promptly set to work to cook it, while poor tired-out Pike got his first rest. As they ate together Pike gave his brother the history of the killing of his first deer, and recounted with amusement the story of Cate's muddy misadventure. Presently, as he took a second piece of the juicy venison, he said:

"'And so we see,' as the school reader says, 'that virtue is its own reward.'"

"I assume that that is a wise or a witty remark, Pike," said his brother smiling. "Otherwise you wouldn't have stopped eating long enough to make it. But I'm too dull to see just what it refers to."

"Oh, your dullness is plain enough," retorted the younger boy, "but you needn't mention it in company. I wouldn't if I were you. But you see I brought this venison with me simply because I

thought you'd enjoy it, and now I'm having a full share of the enjoyment myself. I didn't think of myself in the matter. That's why I say, 'and so we see that virtue is its own reward.' Hello! what's that?"

As he spoke he rose and looked down the road. Instantly he stepped behind a tree, motioning his brother to keep still. A moment or so later he turned to De Kalb and said in a whisper:

"There's a man coming up the road and he's got *two of our horses!*"

De Kalb was quick enough to see what must be done. Meanwhile both boys had armed themselves, and creeping silently through the woods toward the approaching man, they concealed themselves behind trees and awaited his approach. This was necessary, in order to take the man by surprise. If he should see them or come close enough to catch sight of their goods which lay in the woods at a little distance from the road, he would either turn off the road and make his escape, or draw some weapon and attack them.

As they watched, Kab presently said:

"He hasn't any gun, but he's got a pair of horse pistols. We mustn't let him draw them. Be still, Nemo!"

The last command was given to the dog, which

had joined his young masters, with his tail as stiff as a rod of iron, the hair on his back standing straight up, and with his lips drawn back after the manner of a bulldog ready to spring. Fortunately Nemo was under good discipline, and so he obeyed the command to keep still, but all his savage instincts were aroused, and he trembled with eagerness for action.

Evidently the approaching horseman was not expecting danger. He was slowly picking his way along the very bad road, and giving what was left of his attention to the not very easy task of leading the extra horse, which was not accustomed to being led and manifestly didn't like it.

"When he comes up," whispered De Kalb, "you jump out in the road, present your gun, and make him throw up his hands. If he makes a motion to draw his pistols, let him have your charge at close range. I'll do the rest."

At that moment, or a moment later, the man tugging at the led horse and swearing fearfully, reached the spot where the struggle for mastery was to occur.

Pike executed his part of the program promptly, and the muzzle of his gun was within three feet of the man's chest before he knew what had happened. As he reined up suddenly, De Kalb sprang forward,

seized his left arm, and with a violent pull, dragged him to the ground. As he fell heavily, Nemo sprang upon him like a wild beast. But the desperate fellow fought like a catamount. He could not get at his pistols, but he was a powerful man, more than six feet high, and apparently used to rough and tumble fighting. Twice he struck De Kalb, knocking him down, but before he could strike out again, Nemo, aiming at his throat, seized him by the shoulder and held on with a vise-like grip. Under stress of the pain the fellow grew faint so that he could fight no more, and the boys had a good deal of difficulty in making the dog loose his hold. The brute seemed inspired by all the savage impulses of all his bulldog and blood-hound ancestry. Had he succeeded in his first attempt to seize the man by the throat instead of the shoulder he would have made an instant end of him. As it was the two boys succeeded at last in choking the fierce animal loose, and subduing him to their will. As they did so, the man struggled to a sitting posture, drew one of his pistols and fired at the boys. His aim was unsteady and so, fortunately, the shot missed them. There were no such things as revolvers in those days. A "horse pistol," or more properly a horseman's pistol, was a large, single-barreled weapon that could not be fired a second time with-

out re-loading, and before the fellow could draw his second weapon, Pike had him down upon his back, and disarmed. Kab meanwhile saving the fellow's life by holding Nemo.

There was a little patch of leather-wood bushes near at hand, and Pike, remembering his lesson of the day before, hurriedly cut down one of them while still kneeling on his prisoner's chest, stripped off the bark and tied his prisoner with it. By that time Kab had got Nemo under control, and securing a stout rope from their pile of goods, he joined his brother and completed the work of tying the fellow so securely as to render impossible even an attempt on his part to escape or to do any sort of harm.

Then the two boys did what they could toward bandaging the man's wounded shoulder, while he sat in sullen silence. When the bandaging was done, De Kalb began questioning him, to learn what had happened to Jack and Cate, but all to no avail. The only words the fellow would speak were the threatening ones :

“ You fellers 'll be made to pay for this. They 's some pardners o' mine what 'll look arter you.”

CHAPTER VI

The Story of What Had Happened.

VERY naturally the boys were full of anxiety concerning their brothers on the other side of the bad lands. They could not believe that the robber had got away with two of their horses without a fight of a very serious kind. The more they thought of the matter the more firmly convinced they became that either Jack or Cate, or perhaps both, must have been killed or badly injured. Their captive would tell them nothing, and they were not disposed to waste much time in speculating as to the probabilities.

"One of us must take these two horses and go back there as quickly as possible," said Kab. "I reckon I'd better go."

"But your head must ache frightfully from the blow you got on the ear," objected Pike.

"It does, but it won't ache any the less if I stay here. I'd better go, because we don't know what trouble there may be over there, and I'm bigger and stronger than you. Yes, I'll go. You stay here and mind the prisoner. Keep your eyes open and your

gun handy, and if he manages to make serious trouble for you, just give Nemo a chance at him."

"Oh he won't make any trouble that I can't manage," said the boy. "So hurry, Kab. Goodness only knows how badly you may be needed."

The elder boy swung himself upon one of the horses and, leading the other, set off at as rapid a gait as he could manage. He rode the horse that objected to being led, and had no difficulty with the other.

When he had covered a little more than half the distance he met the wagon, which the other two horses were toilsomely trying to drag over the bad road. He observed at once that Cate was driving, while Jack was nowhere to be seen.

This aroused his very worst fears, and as soon as he came within hailing distance he called out:

"Where is Jack?"

"He's in the wagon," answered Cate, "he's hurt a little, but not very badly."

When De Kalb came nearer, there was a sharp cross fire of questions, of course. Cate wanted to know how Kab had come into possession of the horses, and Kab wanted to know how the robber had managed to get them. Kab wanted to hear more about Jack and Cate wanted to hear if Pike was hurt in any way. This last question was suggested

by a glance that Cate gave at Kab's swollen, bruised and blackened jaw.

As the wagon had halted, Jack crawled out of its tail, with his head swathed in a towel, and joined in the conversation,—or rather he proceeded to stop it.

"There's too much to tell on both sides," he said, "for us to tell any of it here. Hitch in the extra horses, and let's go on without talking. Nobody's killed, and as for the rest of it, we'll talk it all over in camp to-night."

"All right," called out Kab, "only I must tell you that we caught the thief, and Pike and Nemo are guarding what Nemo's jaws left of him."

"Good!" exclaimed Jack. "Tell us about it."

"Not a word," answered Kab, "till we get to camp. Those were your own orders, Jack, and I always obey orders, you know. So let me help you back into the wagon, and we'll be off."

That was decidedly the best plan, and it was carried out. Thanks to the improvement that Pike had wrought in the road, the four horses were able to go forward slowly but without the frequent haltings that had been necessary on the former trip, so that the caravan arrived at the camp a good deal earlier than Pike had dared hope. Still the afternoon was nearly gone, and as all the party were hungry and very weary both with the work and with

the excitement they had gone through, it was decided to get supper as soon as possible and after hearing each other's stories, go early to sleep.

We already know the story of adventure that Kab and Pike had to relate. Jack was spokesman for himself and Cate, and this is the story he told.

"When I got there with the wagon, Cate and I set to work loading. After we had got all the things into the wagon, we fed the horses and decided to have dinner before starting. It was rather early, of course, but we had our appetites with us, and we didn't know how late it would be before we could get here. So, as I said, we decided to have dinner before starting.

"Just as we sat down to our venison and corn bread, that fellow"—pointing at their prisoner—"came along, with a bridle in his hand and asked us if we had seen a stray horse, with an old saddle on him, anywhere around there. Of course we hadn't seen any horse, because there wasn't any, as we know now, but we believed what he said when he said it. He told us he was going to Greensburg——"

"Well, he told the truth that time, anyhow," interrupted Kab; "for we'll see that he gets there and takes lodging in the jail. But go on, Jack. Tell us the rest of it."

"Well, he said he had been riding, but had stopped

to eat a bite and had hitched his horse to a tree. After awhile, according to his account, he went off to hunt for a spring and get some water, and when he came back his horse had slipped the bridle and gone. We invited him to have some of our dinner, and he did so. Just as we finished eating, he observed our guns and said :

“ ‘ I wish I had had one o’ them shootin’ irons with me down the road there.’

“ When I asked him why, he told us he had seen a big covey of partridges feeding in the little glade half a mile down the road. At that Cate jumped up, took his gun and set off to find the birds. After he was gone the man talked on with me for a while, saying that if Cate got any birds he would ask him for one of them to serve as his supper. I noticed that he didn’t seem very much troubled about his missing horse, and I told him so. He answered :

“ ‘ Oh the beast won’t wander far. He ain’t got no sperrit ’ceptin just enough to slip the bridle. I’ll find him pretty soon.’

“ All this while he was trimming the knots off the stick he carried, and presently he rose to his feet and struck me twice with it, here on my head. That’s the last I remember. Cate, you’ll have to tell the rest.”

“ Well, I didn’t find any birds, of course,” said

Cate. "There weren't any there. That was a lie told just to get me to go down the road out of sight and hearing. When I came back after awhile, I found Jack trying to sit up and not making much out of the effort. His head and clothes were covered with blood, and at first he couldn't tell me what had happened. When I had bathed his head and bound it up, Jack seemed to come to himself, and the first thing he said was: 'The horses.' I ran to the wagon and found that the two leaders were gone. Then I took my gun and following their tracks, hurried along the road, in hopes of coming within gunshot of the fellow. But he had evidently got a big start, and presently I saw that the tracks turned off the road and into the woods, where I lost them completely. I suppose he turned off in that way just to throw me off the track and then came back to the road. At any rate there was no use in trying to follow him further, so I hurried back to Jack, and found him trying to hitch up the wheel-horses. He was still a little bit unsteady on his feet and his hands didn't seem to obey him very well in fastening buckles and the like, but he could talk all right and think all right, so we both concluded that he had only been stunned. We decided to make a start and see if we couldn't drag the load with the two horses. Then you met us, and you know the rest."

"It was a pretty daring thing to do," said Kab, reflectively.

"Oh I don't know," said Jack. "There wasn't much risk in doing it. It seems to me to have been rather a sneaking sort of crime. It isn't as if he had made a fair fight."

"No," said Cate, "and after all it's our own fault that we came so near losing the horses. We oughtn't to have allowed ourselves to be caught napping. I oughtn't to have gone off after the birds, and Jack oughtn't to have given the fellow a chance to hit him unawares."

"Moral," said Kab. "We mustn't be taken off our guard again. Of course this fellow has 'partners,' as he says, and they may try to rescue him. We must never be caught without our guns handy and well loaded. Now, Cate, you and Pike and I will take turns in standing guard to-night. Jack really isn't fit. We must be off by sunrise in the morning and as the roads are good on this side of the creek we must try to make Greensburg by night-fall."

CHAPTER VII

Heroes of the Village

THE country through which the boys now had to pass was high and almost entirely level—a sort of tableland, with just enough of roll in it to give it drainage. The track that served as a road was firm and smooth, so that the going was easy. The road lay mainly through the dense forest that clothed all that region, a forest composed chiefly of great, smooth-barked beech trees, growing so thickly in their wide-spreading upper parts that the sunlight found difficulty in sifting through.

Here and there in the beech woods, there stood clumps of hickory, or ash, or oak, or walnut, and at certain points there were great groves of sugar maples, or "sugar trees," as they were called in Southern Indiana, with few or no other trees growing among them. These sugar trees were forest giants, rising to a great height, as straight in their trunks as if they had been so many arrows, and almost as black as ink, because every spring their over-abundant sap, or "sugar water" oozed out and dried on the bark to the color of ink.

There was little or no underbrush in these forests, whether the trees happened to be beech, hickory, maple, oak or ash. The foliage above was so dense that bushes could not grow beneath the trees. Here and there a little open space permitted the sun to reach the ground, and in such places there grew clumps of paw-paw bushes, or little groves of leatherwood. But in the woods themselves the spaces between the trees were as free of all undergrowth and vines as if the forest had been a planted and carefully cultivated grove.

As the Shelby boys continued their journey, they came now and then upon an opening where some pioneer had settled himself and made the beginnings of a farm. His house was usually a log cabin; sometimes it consisted of two log cabins with a covered porch or passage-way between. His fields were full of stumps, where he had cut away the trees too recently for the stumps to have rotted as yet. It was difficult to plow in such fields, and in the main the farmers cultivating them depended upon the hoe. But the soil was very rich and the pioneers had the comfort of knowing that with every year their fields would become freer and freer of stumps. They did not have to project their minds many years into the future, to see their farms great, unobstructed areas, easy to cultivate and yielding crops that must make

them and their families comfortable and prosperous so far as this world's goods were concerned.

"They begin with everything at the worst," said Jack, "but they have the consolation of knowing that everything will get better as they go on. It's a hard task to clear forest lands like these and get even a small crop to growing, and it's hard cultivating among the stumps. But the hardest part comes first and the history of every settler in such a country as this, ought to be a history of things getting better and better."

"Yes," said De Kalb, "and that must be our history—the story we'll have to tell to the young people when we grow old. Fortunately we're beginning young, when we don't mind hard work or care much for comfort. If we work as we ought to, we'll have all the comforts that reasonable people ought to care for, long before we grow old enough to feel the need of them."

"Well, we're going to work as we ought to," said Pike, full of enthusiasm, "and if we have good luck—"

"There'll be no luck about it," said Kab. "There never is luck in anything. It's all a question of hard work and good sense, especially in a country like this where the land is almost as rich as a hot bed. If there's any touch of luck about the matter in our

case, it came to us when mother couldn't sell the square mile of land on Clifty Creek. We've got that, and we don't owe anybody a dollar, and if we don't make good places for ourselves in the world it will be our own fault. We can't blame it on luck."

"Do you think you can find our land Jack," asked Pike. "You see it would be awkward——"

"Awkward if we find that somebody has carried it away? Yes, that would be very awkward, Pike, but there isn't much danger of that. There are some trees there that have probably held it down."

"You know that isn't what I meant," said Pike, a trifle teased by his brother's bantering. "I meant——"

"I know what you meant, Pike. Yes, I can go straight to the land from Milford, and better still, I can show you exactly what its boundaries are, for the surveyor marked them out by hatchet cuts on the trees when father located the place."

"Is Milford much of a town?"

"No. It isn't a town at all as yet, I suppose. There's a ford there and a mill by it, so the ford is called Mill-ford, and people call the place Milford. There was a blacksmith's shop there when I saw the place. I suppose there may be a little store there now, but I don't know. The only town there is in

Decatur county is Greensburg, and that is a very little one. The court-house is there and the jail, and there is a little store or may be two of them by this time—and a few dozen houses. We're nearly there now."

"How do you know?"

"I asked a farmer about a mile back, and he said it was four miles from his place, so it can't be much more than three from here. Besides, I could tell that we were nearing the town merely by looking at the farms and the fields."

"But how, Jack?" queried Pike, who always wanted to know the why and the wherefore of things.

"Well, you see for one thing the farm clearings are nearer together than they were in the country we've passed through. That is always the case as you approach a town. You see men generally want to get as near town as they can, for convenience' sake, and for company, and so the lands near a town are the earliest ones settled. Look there! There are no stumps at all in that field, and very few in the field beyond. That means that those fields were cleared and opened five or six years ago. The stumps have had time to rot out."

Pike was satisfied with the explanation, but had other questions to ask.

"Is Greensburg the biggest town in Decatur county?"

"It's the only one, so far as I know, and it is the county seat. Otherwise we might have cut across country, saving several miles of travel, for Greensburg is a trifle out of our way in going to Clifty Creek. But we must get our prisoner into jail, and after all I reckon we'll gain as much in better roads as we lose in distance. You see the roads that converge at the county seat are apt to be the best in the county, particularly in a new country like this."

"How far is it from Greensburg to Clifty Creek?"

"Eight or ten miles, I should say—perhaps a little more or a little less. Anyhow we'll settle ourselves on our own land to-morrow night."

Pike felt like shouting in glee over that announcement, but as there were some people passing at the moment, he restrained his enthusiasm, and contented himself with hurrying the horses over the firm and perfectly level road.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the Shelby boys reached Greensburg. The first thing Jack did, while the boys attended to the horses, was to inquire for the sheriff. As the Fall term of the court was in session the little town was pretty full of farmers from all parts of the county, and the

news quickly spread among these that the newcomers had a horse thief for their prisoner. The result was that before the sheriff could come to take charge of the man, the Shelby wagon was surrounded by a mob of angry and excited people, who, when they heard the story, were strongly inclined to hang the fellow to the nearest tree.

Fortunately the sheriff arrived in time to prevent violence, but the angry crowd followed him into the court-house when he took the prisoner there to have him committed to jail by order of the judge.

The judge put the four boys upon oath and bade them tell their story. When they had done so, he said :

“ It’s a case of ‘ caught in the act with the goods on him.’ Mr. Sheriff, take him to jail, and guard him securely. There must be no lynching. The court will hold you responsible for that.”

Then turning to the crowd, as if addressing them, he added :

“ The anger which the court sees written in your faces, is quite natural and not surprising. In a new, agricultural region like this, horse-stealing is justly regarded as a peculiarly heinous crime. In such a country the peaceful and secure possession of horses is of the utmost necessity to the welfare of every man and every family. The horse under such cir-

cumstances has a value far greater than can be measured by the price at which such animals can be bought or sold. The horse thief is therefore in a peculiar sense a public enemy.

" And that is not all. In this part of the state of Indiana we have peculiar reasons of our own for desiring the apprehension and punishment of such criminals as the prisoner in this case is alleged to be. It is known to all of you that the region round about us is infested by a dangerous and desperate gang of men who make a business not only of horse stealing, but also of burglary and highway robbery, with murder as a lightly regarded incident of their nefarious business. Every effort to break up this gang has failed. It seems to have no particular headquarters; its leader is not known, and its membership is an inscrutable mystery. All that we know is that its crimes are frequent over a wide area of country, including perhaps half a dozen counties. Now and then a member of the gang is caught and punished with the utmost severity of the law, and in two instances in a county adjoining this the offenders have been lawlessly punished with death at the hands of an excited mob. Not one of the offenders as yet apprehended has revealed aught of the organization. Even the offer of the mob to spare the lives of the two who were hanged did not in-

duce them to tell anything as to who their comrades in crime might be.

"In view of these facts, the excitement and anger you have shown is in no way surprising, especially as this is the first instance in which one accused of such offenses has been arrested within the borders of our own county. But I call upon you as law-abiding citizens to restrain your wrath and permit the law to take its orderly course. You will not have long to wait. Fortunately the Grand Jury is in session, and I will send these young men to testify before it to-morrow morning. If an indictment is found, I shall set the trial for one week from next Monday."

The judge had accomplished his purpose. He had detained the crowd in the court room long enough to let the sheriff lock his prisoner in jail and set a squad of deputies—hastily sworn in for that purpose—to defend the prison. Then he adjourned court and, calling the boys to him invited them to take supper with him. When they objected on the ground that they must guard their wagon-load of goods, he answered:

"I'll send some of the village boys to attend to that. They'll be glad enough to do it, for the fact that the judge of the court has selected them for a

public duty, will make them the proudest and most envied fellows in the whole county."

The boys went at once to their wagon, where all the boys of the little town seemed to have gathered in wide-eyed curiosity and unspeakable admiration of the Shelbys, as the heroes of the most sensational incident the villagers had ever known.

There was not much to be done in the way of getting themselves ready for supper at Judge Moore's house. The boys washed their faces, combed their hair, and put on their coats. That was all, and in that backwoods land it was as much as anybody could do in the way of dressing even for the most imposing occasion.

CHAPTER VIII

A Journeyman Schoolmaster

THE judge was so well pleased with what the boys had done, that he invited a special guest to meet them at supper. This guest was introduced as Mr. Dennis O'Reilly. He was an Irishman, as his name suggested and as his brogue conclusively proved. His age was perhaps forty or forty-five. In person he was rather short, but very powerfully built. His head was massive and it looked as if it might have a good deal in it, under the half curling shock of sandy-red hair which crowned it as if with an aureole.

His brogue was pronounced at times, but less so at other times. It was the brogue of a thoroughly educated man, while his diction, though at times a trifle formal and old-fashioned, was that of a man who to thorough education in the schools, has added the culture that comes of travel. His traveling had in fact taken a range that would be regarded as very wide even in our time of general globe-trotting, and

was quite unheard-of among men of the West during the first half of the nineteenth century.

"Mr. O'Reilly has been everywhere," said Judge Moore in introducing the guest, "and you'll find—"

"Now, plaze the court, judge," interrupted the other, with a deprecatory raising of the hand, "I submit that that's a very comprehensive indictment you're framing up against me, and it moight be a bit difficult to sustain it before these young gintlemen, sitting as a jury. Young gintlemen, it's only this way. I'm a journeyman schoolmaster, and in the course of the twenty-odd years since I took me degree at the University of Dublin, I've gone about a bit, teaching in various places and doing a little traveling between whiles. Now that's quoite enough about Dinnis O'Reilly. I want to hear about yourselves, young gintlemen, if you don't moind gratifying me curiosity."

With that he set himself to draw out of them all he could, by dint of adroit indirect questioning. They told him who they were, whence they had come, and what they had set out to do in the way of creating a home for their mother and sisters.

"And it's a moightly intilligent and careful mother you've got," said O'Reilly when they had done. "I make me most respectful bow to her!"

"Why, do you know our mother?" asked De Kalb.

"Oh, as to that you have read your Bible, I suppose. You remember what it says about knowing the tree by its fruits. No, I never saw your good mother, but I should be proud to make her acquaintance. I judge her by her work in bringing up you boys."

"But you don't know us, and we're just ordinary Hoosier boys."

"Hoosier boys, yes, but not just ordinary. Your mother has taken pains to teach you to speak correctly. I observe that you do not say 'I 'low' to do so and so, as everybody hereabouts does. You say, 'reckon' instead. That's Kentuckian, and I like 'suppose' better. But 'reckon' is right enough, while the use of 'allow,' usually abbreviated to 'low,' is execrable. We won't discuss that further. I make me bow to your mother, and I'm interested in your work. I've a moind to join you if you'll let me."

"How do you mean?" asked Jack.

"Why as I told you, I'm a journeyman schoolmaster out of a job, and I've a moind to give meself a little varoietry. Me muscles are flabby, and I want to tone them up. So if you don't moind, I'm going with you to Clifty Creek when you leave here. I'll

help you get settled, and then maybe we can arrange for me to remain awhile, taking pot-luck with you, and working for me board, or paying for it in money if my work isn't enough."

"But I thought you had a school here."

"So I did, but I've given it up because I want to rest and recuperate in the woods for awhile."

"Come, Mr. O'Reilly," said the judge, "you must stick closer to the truth than that. You know you gave up the school only because you knew the young lady who's to be your successor needed the money it would bring."

"And what difference does that make, in heaven's name? Isn't she a dear young lady, and haven't I taught her meself till I know she is competent? Then why shouldn't I take meself out of her way, poor dear? Your mention of that was what you call in court 'not pertinent.' It's a fact that I've a moind to rest a bit from the schoolmastering. I've held the school here for two years now, and it's a rare thing for me to remain contented in one place for that long. I can open a school somewhere else whenever I plaze, but I've a moind now to turn meself out to grass for a bit. Anyhow, may I go with you, Jack Shelby? You can send me off again whenever you plaze."

The boys eagerly assented to the plan, feeling sure

that the company of the jolly, good-humored school-master would greatly lighten their lives.

"But we haven't any sort of house to sleep in yet," said Jack. "If you'll wait a few days, we'll get some kind of a shelter built——"

"And why should I wait? No, If I'm going to join your party I'm going with you to help you get settled. That's the very thing in which I can help to the best advantage. As for slaping, I've had the ground for me couch and a snow-storm for me blanket, many and many's the time. I know from experience just how the soft side of a rock feels underneath your person. You must understand I'm a journeyman—that means a man that travels about and takes things as they come without quarreling with his circumstances. 'Tis the very highest philosophy to reconcile yourself with circumstances and make yourself happy quite irrespective of comfort. I'll explain some other things relating to the true philosophy of life when we're sitting around a fire in the chilly evenings. At present I must take me leave and go pack my little belongings for the morrow's journey. Judge, I bid you a cordial good night. Good night, young gentlemen!"

When he had gone, and the boys were about to leave also, the judge said:

"You're in great luck I assure you. He's the

jolliest kind of companion, and he has evidently taken a liking to you boys. You'll find him a constant inspiration to good humor, and to some other good things too. He's really very learned, and he has seen a great deal of the world, and he not only likes boys but has the knack of making boys like him.

"He is the most generous and unselfish man I ever saw, and when he works at anything he's a 'wheel-horse' as we say. I don't think he ever had an ache or a pain in his life, and it is the very central principle of his philosophy to be happy. He's odd and queer in his ways, but you may be sure he's as healthy in his mind as in his body. I shall miss him greatly, and as for our Greensburg boys, they regard his refusal to continue in the school as a positive calamity."

"Why doesn't he keep the school still, if everybody wants him to?" asked Pike.

"Simply because of his generosity. There's a young woman here who is obliged to earn some money, and as she has studied hard to make a teacher of herself, O'Reilly insists upon turning the school over to her. She wanted to go away and teach somewhere else, but he told her that she'd find it hard to get a fairly good school among strangers, while the one here pays very well. Every boy and girl for

five miles around attends it, and last year there were half a dozen boys from a distance sent here to board and attend O'Reilly's school, so widely has his fame as a teacher spread. So he declared that he was tired of the job and wanted rest and outdoor life, and all that, just to compel the young woman to take the school and do well for herself. He doesn't seem to care about money or fame or anything else except being happy in his own queer way, which, you'll find, consists largely in making other people happy. Oh, I tell you, boys, you're in luck. Now, good night. The Grand Jury will meet at nine o'clock and I'll send you before it at once. It won't take you long to tell your story, and so you can resume your journey about ten. But as I shall be on the bench then and hearing a case, I must say good-bye and good luck to you now. I hope to see you in Greensburg sometimes."

CHAPTER IX

At Home Out-of-Doors

THE party left Greensburg about ten o'clock in the morning, and, as the country was level and the road smooth, they reached their final destination a little after five o'clock on a Saturday afternoon.

In a grove not very far from the corner of their land, and only a little way from a convenient ford across Clifty Creek, they found a large spring of very clear and very cold water, running out of a rock ledge, from which the land rose gently for forty yards or so, where it became a high and nearly level table-land, thickly covered with great forest trees.

It was Jack's plan to plant the party from the beginning at or near the spot on which the permanent family home was presently to be built. He halted the wagon, therefore, and set about studying the "lay of the land," in order that the site of their future home might be chosen with due reference to all the conditions. After half an hour of careful inspection he ordered the wagon to the high ground a few hundred feet from the great spring and gave

his directions for such unloading as must be done that evening. He directed some of the party to chop a fallen and seasoned tree into wood for their camp-fire. He himself felled a great slippery elm which must be removed to make room for the house building, and directed Pike to build a large fire against the trunk of it. "It will serve as a fireplace," he said, "shielding the fire against wind, and as it is green it will burn away very slowly. It will last till we begin building and want it out of the way."

"Shan't we begin building right away?" asked Pike in something like consternation.

"Certainly not. We must provide ourselves first with some sort of hut for winter quarters, and we must get all our building materials together before we begin. Besides, I find we have some open glades, and we must plow and plant them this fall. I'll tell you all about that another time."

Pike and the schoolmaster fed and curried the horses, and then Pike set to work getting supper while the rest of the company made other necessary preparations for the night. The boy dressed some squirrels that he had shot along the road during the day, and when they were washed, ready for cooking, he laid them upon the tree trunk to wait there until the corn bread should be nearly cooked. He mixed

the meal with water and a little salt, and, with his hands, moulded the stiff dough into pones. These he placed in a hot skillet which he covered with its hot iron lid, and placed upon a bed of coals drawn out of the fire for that purpose. To keep the heat even above and below he shoveled live coals on the lid of the skillet which had a rim around it made for the purpose of thus holding the coals in place.

When Mr. O'Reilly, the schoolmaster, saw Pike dressing the squirrels, he hurried off down the hill and Pike last saw him crossing the road and following the brook that flowed from the spring, as if in search of something. After a little while he returned, carrying a large ball of blue-colored mud in his hands. Laying this upon a large clean chip, he took up the squirrels and wrapped each of them in a coat of the blue clay. As each was made ready, he dug a hole for it in the coals, threw it in and drew fire over it. In answer to Pike's question he explained:

"What you call the mud is blue clay, as clane and pure as the water of the spring itself. It's the best way in the world to cook a squirrel—just to cover it with a coat of blue clay and bury it in the hot coals. You'd have broiled the squirrels, I dare say. Well in that way you'd have lost much of their juices and most of their savor, to say nothing of the

risk of scorching them or of having some parts of them burnt and other parts underdone. Now in my way of cooking them I lose none of the juices, and you'll find when they are done that they'll be quite evenly cooked in all their parts. I must go back now and bring me share of the wood. Don't interfere with the squirrels. I'll take them up when they are ready."

Pike had not yet finished mixing his dough when the last of the squirrels was placed in the fire, and the wood carrying was briskly kept up during all the time of the bread-making and baking, and in the meanwhile Pike completed the work of getting supper by making a large pot of coffee. That done, he called out:

"Supper's ready—at least my part of it is. How about yours, Mr. O'Reilly?"

"We'll see," answered the schoolmaster, poking about in the coals with a green twig. "It is all right and lovely," he exclaimed. "Let us wash our hands and heads, and then eat. It won't hurt the squirrels to remain in the fire while we're performing our ablutions."

When all was ready, the schoolmaster drew the squirrels out of the fire. Each of them looked, in its clay wrapping, like an ill-shapen brickbat, for the clay had become as hard with baking as a piece

of pottery, and it was quite as brittle too, as O'Reilly showed the boys when he laid one of the squirrels on a large chip and tapped it with the handle of his knife. The red-hot clay broke instantly into bits and fell away, leaving the steaming squirrel to tempt the hungry boys with its appearance and its enticing odor.

"That trick's a new trick to me," said Jack, as he ate the juicy game, "but it's a good one. I think I never tasted a squirrel half so delicious. I don't see why other meats might not be cooked in the same way."

"They can, and not meats only but other things as well, especially green corn. If you strip off the outer husks of a roasting ear, leaving the inner ones, and coat it with clay, you'll find it will come out of the fire in its very highest perfection. But it's a process for meats mainly. The trouble with meats is that so large a part of their juices is lost in cooking. If you roast them in clay, that cannot happen."

"But, Mr. O'Reilly," broke in Pike, "how did you know there was a bed of blue clay down there by the spring branch? You hadn't been there before."

"I did not know it" answered the schoolmaster, "but I had a belief to that effect, and that belief was founded upon observation and sound reason. You see clay is a mineral substance—a mass of

broken down or disintegrated minerals. It is so finely comminuted, as to the particles composing it, that running water easily carries them in suspension, as the geologists say. But it is so heavy that wherever the stream bearing these suspended particles grows sluggish in its flow, the mineral particles sink, and slowly a bed of clay is formed. Now in this part of the country pretty nearly every living spring carries more or less of clay in suspension, and so at the first still pool of the spring branch there is very apt to be a bed of clay. Acting upon me knowledge of that fact, I judged that I should find a clay bed by following the stream."

By this time Cate was minutely examining the water in a bright new tin cup. When the schoolmaster had finished, the boy said:

"But this water is absolutely clear. Surely there can't be any clay in it."

"Indade there is," promptly replied the Irishman. "But the human eye is a very imperfect optical instrument, incapable of discerning particles so infinitely small. Feel of the wet clay there. Pinch off a bit of it and rub it between your thumb and finger. You'll not feel it, except as you would feel a film of soap. That's because the particles composing it are so small as to be impalpable—that word means undistinguishable by the sense of

touch. In many clays there is a fine sand, and you can easily feel the sand, but blue clay usually has no sand at all in it. Still if there were much clay in the water, you'd see it. That is to say, it would give an easily discernible blue tinge to the water. You can test that for yourself, by stirring a small bit of the clay in the water."

"Then why isn't the water in the spring blue?" asked De Kalb.

"Simply because there is not enough clay in it to give it color."

"How much would you say there is in a gallon of it?"

"Too little to be calculated in any way—probably not enough in ten hogsheads of the water to make a bit the size of a pin's point," answered O'Reilly.

"Then how can that bed of clay have been deposited there from this spring water?" It was Jack who asked the question.

"Oh, you must allow for the element or factor of time. That spring has been flowing out of the rock ledge there for thousands of years, and for thousands of years the stream flowing from it has been paying a minute tribute of clay to the bed down there. It's a foine instance and illustration of what persistent endeavor can accomplish. But it's late, and we're tired. Good night."

CHAPTER X

The Schoolmaster Talks

THE Sunday morning broke gloriously, with a clear sky, a bright sun and a gentle breeze from the south which was laden with the odors of the forest. It was a perfect day for rest, and now that their wearisome journey was at last done, the boys felt the need of rest as they had not done at any time on the way. It is true that they had passed one Sunday on their journey, and they had not traveled on that day; but it had rained heavily then, and the time had been in every way uncomfortable. Now all the conditions were favorable. The weather was perfect, and they were gladdened with the consciousness of a difficult task well and completely done.

Breakfast over, all the party strolled about for a time looking over the land, but keeping within sight of the horses and the wagon, lest something should go wrong there. This was not deemed absolutely necessary, as the part of Decatur county in which their new home lay was sparsely settled, and that only by quiet, orderly people from whom no mis-

chief of any kind was to be expected. But there were wild animals in the woodlands, including a good many wolves, and it was necessary to keep watch for them.

As they looked about, Jack pointed to a very large grove, or a small forest rather, of great sugar trees, which stood only a few hundred yards south of the spot selected for house building.

"There," said Jack; "that'll be one of our earliest sources of income. We'll tap those trees early in the spring, and make a big lot of country sugar, which we can sell for a good price in Cincinnati, and the money will keep us going while our crops are growing."

On one edge of the maple grove, or "sugar camp" as it was common to call such a grove, there lay an open space of several acres entirely free of all forest growths, but heavily covered with dry prairie grass.

"There's our first field," said Jack looking at it with eyes that seemed to welcome the sight. "We'll set two plows at work there to-morrow."

"What, before doing anything toward building the house?" asked Pike, who was full of questions.

"Yes," answered Jack, "before doing anything else at all. At least two of us will work at that with the four horses, while the others do something else.

That prairie grass sod has been growing there year after year for ages perhaps, till its roots have struck deep into the earth, and it'll be hard work to get it into good condition for corn by spring. So I should want it broken up now, for the sake of letting the winter frosts into the soil, even if there were no other reason."

"What is the other reason?" asked one of the boys.

"Why I mean to plant a crop there at once."

"A crop? what sort of crop can you plant at this time of year?"

"Turnips," answered Jack. "They'll grow till Christmas or later, and we'll find a use for all we can get. I'm going to buy a cow or two for one thing, and perhaps one or two hogs, and the turnips will help to feed them."

As it was desirable for Jack and the others to go farther away in order to look over the ground, Pike volunteered to remain on guard over the goods and the horses in their absence.

"I want to write a letter home," he explained. "I asked at the post-office yesterday as we came by, and found that the mail will go out from Milford to-morrow. It goes only once a week, and we ought to let mother and the girls know as soon as possible that we've got here safely."

"All right, Pike," said Jack. "Your letter will carry the first news of us that mother has had, and we'll be back in time for dinner."

In our time each of a company of boys situated as the Shelby brothers were, would have written one or two letters to go out by that morrow's mail, but the sending of letters in that early time was an expensive thing, so that people were not inclined to waste postage. The charge on a letter then ranged from five cents to twenty-five cents, according to the route the letter must travel, and money was worth greatly more then than it is now, so that letter writing was a costly luxury.

Pike got out a sheet of large letter paper, the only kind in use then except foolscap, on which many people wrote their letters because it was a little cheaper and all paper was very expensive. He wrote on only three of the four pages which the sheet afforded. Those three pages were ruled, while the back page of the sheet was left without rules and reserved for the address. For envelopes were not in use then. A letter sheet must be folded in a peculiar way, which every school boy was required to learn, so that when folded all the written pages would be hidden from view, the one blank page forming the outside of the letter. Such letters were

sealed with little round red wafers, of which the boys had brought a box with them.

There were no postage stamps then and it was not customary for people to prepay their postage, except when writing purely business letters. To prepay the postage on a friendly letter was deemed an affront to the person to whom it was sent. It seemed to be like casting a doubt upon that person's ability or willingness to pay. It was not until after the middle of the nineteenth century—more than a dozen years later than the time of this story—that stamps came into use, and the prepayment of postage became common. Even then prepayment was not obligatory. The government reduced postage rates to five cents for each letter, when not prepaid, and three cents when prepaid, whether with a stamp or in money. It was to provide a convenient coin with which to prepay postage that the government issued the first three-cent pieces. A little later prepayment was made obligatory, and a little later still the use of stamps became general.

At the time when Pike's letter was written there by the out-of-door fire, none of these things were known.

On that walk over their land, the boys made some discoveries that pleased them a good deal. On his former visit Jack had not observed things relating

to the tract with particular attention, as he had not dreamed then that it would ever be his task to make a farm out of it. He had thought of it simply as so much wild land which would some day become valuable, and he had carried away only the general impression that it was heavily timbered. Now that he inspected it more carefully, he discovered three or four of what he called "ready-made fields"—areas like the one on which he had decided to sow turnips—free from forest growths, and needing nothing but a thorough plowing and harrowing to get them ready for the planting of crops.

These open spaces varied in size from an acre to three or four acres apiece.

"Those ready-made fields mean a good deal to us," he said as the little company sat at their dinner that day. "I had reckoned upon having no land to cultivate next spring except such as we could clear of timber during the winter. As it is we'll keep the plows going now till all our open spaces are broken up."

"Then we can grow corn on them in the spring?" asked Pike, who, having remained at camp, had heard none of Jack's plans.

"Only on the turnip field," Kab answered. "We're going to seed all the others in winter wheat. Of course we can't sow wheat among the turnips

and so that piece of ground must be left till spring for corn. We must make the rest of our cornfields with our axes."

"How do those spaces come to be open in that way?" asked Pike, who always wanted to know. "Why haven't they grown up in woods like the rest of the land?"

"How can anybody tell that?" Cate interrupted. "Pike, you can ask questions in a minute that nobody can answer in a year. It's a bad habit."

"Not at all," broke in O'Reilly. "It's the best possible habit of mind for a boy or a young man or anybody else to cultivate. 'Doubt is the beginning of wisdom,' you know, and Doubt always asks questions. That's the only way we ever learn anything. If nobody asked questions nobody would ever know anything. We'd all be as stupid as the dumb brutes —yes and stupider too, for even they ask questions all the time. When Nemo, there, goes smelling around he's asking what game there may be about and which way it's going, and all that sort of thing. Now I'll answer your question, Pike, to the best of me ability. We can't be perfectly sure how these open spaces in the forest came to be as they are, but we can give a very good guess, and such facts as we know and such phenomena as the spaces them-

selves present tend strongly to confirm our conjecture."

"Good!" interjected Jack. "I'm as anxious as Pike is to know the reasons, and I quite agree with you that his habit of asking about things is a good one."

"Certainly it is. Well now you know the red Indians,"—Mr. O'Reilly pronounced it "Injuns," just as he always pronounced the word "immediate" as if it were spelled "immejiate"—"the red Indians were not altogether savage, even when white men first found them in America. Some of them indeed were considerably advanced in a civilization or half civilization of their own. I'm not speaking of the higher tribes now, but just of the common ordinary, bloodthirsty ones. They lived in part by the cultivation of the soil. They were uncivilized enough to make their women folk do all the work but they were civilized enough to live in part at least upon what was produced by cultivating the soil. They grew corn, beans, pumpkins, squashes and the like, or at least their women grew such things for them by a rude sort of agriculture. In those parts of the country where there were open lands they scratched them a little with sticks and bones that served them instead of hoes or spades or plows. In those parts of the country where the whole face of

the earth was thickly covered with trees, they had to make fields for themselves by destroying the timber. They didn't cut the trees down, but they girdled them just as white men do nowadays in what we call a 'deadening.' That is to say they cut through the bark in a ring around the lower part of the tree, so that the sap could not flow, and the trees must die. When that happened the sun could shine upon the earth, unobstructed by foliage above and the Indians could grow corn there. Sometimes, by way of improving upon this, they set fire to the trees after they were dead and dry, thus getting rid of them entirely. In either case the trees or their stumps rotted away in the course of years. Even their roots decayed in time, and the cultivation of the soil, slight and rude as it was, prevented new tree growths from springing up in the cleared spaces. When after awhile the Indians abandoned one of these fields of theirs it quickly grew up in prairie grass, and that as you know, is a very choking kind of growth. A beechnut falling into prairie grass is more likely to be picked up by some bird than to reach the soil, and even if it reaches the soil the chances are ten to one that the grass will kill it. But that isn't all. The Indians had fire, and in their wanderings about, they were apt to build their fires in these open glades. If the grass happened to be

parched and dry, as it always is after midsummer, it naturally took fire, and all the young tree sprouts that had ventured to be born there were burned to death, and so the open glades remained open glades."

"That seems to be a reasonable explanation," said De Kalb, "but what were the things you referred to as tending to prove the theory?"

"Not so fast, young man," answered O'Reilly quickly. "You should use your words more circumspectly. I did not say there was anything to 'prove' this explanation, for there is not. I only said that certain things which we see tend to confirm us in the belief that this is the true explanation."

"Well, I promise to speak more guardedly next time, Mr. O'Reilly, if you'll tell us what the things are that tend to confirm the theory."

"Very well, then, I'll explain. In the first place there is the fact that these glades lie in the very midst of dense woodlands, and that except for them, this whole region is heavily timbered and has been so for so many hundreds or thousands of years that underbrush seems to have forgotten how to grow upon it. If these glades were formed only upon particular kinds of soil, different in some way from that of the woodlands that surround them, we might regard such difference of soil or situation as account-

ing for their existence. But in fact there are no such differences. The glades occur in the very midst of the forest where the soil, the situation and all other conditions are identically the same as in the woodlands round about. The same forces of nature that clothed all the rest of the land with forest, existed in equal measure in the open glades. The showers of beechnuts that sow the forests thick every autumn—you'll find them lying three or four inches deep on the ground when they ripen a little while hence—sow the open glades as well. In brief it is obvious that the glades exist because the natural processes that created the forests have been interfered with in some manner, and as we know that the Indians did make and cultivate fields in the way I have described, it seems almost certain that the glades are old Indian fields."

"That would seem to be a very natural conclusion," said Jack, who had listened with great interest; "particularly as we do not find any other lands that have been even deadened and scratched."

"That is not all," resumed the schoolmaster. "We observe that near each of these glades there is a water supply of some kind—a spring, or a brook, or as you boys call it, a 'branch.' In picking out spots to cultivate, the Indians would naturally select those near their villages or camps, and of

course their villages and camps were placed within easy reach of drinking water. Still again, I have observed that in nearly every one of these glades—and I have minutely examined many of them—there are fragments of charcoal to be found, which I take to be relics of burning trees. Charcoal, you know, is one of the most indestructible of all substances, so long as it is not burned up."

"Is it?" asked Kab. "Why I should have thought it would dissolve or rot very soon if left in the earth or out where rain could get at it."

"And there you would have thought altogether wrong. Charcoal never rots and never dissolves in water. It is for that reason that on the prairies to the northwest of us, surveyors mark land corners by burying charcoal in them. It is more enduring than the hardest rock. But besides the charcoal we often find in these glades such things as these which I picked up in your prospective turnip patch this morning."

With that O'Reilly drew from one of his capacious coat pockets a number of beautifully formed Indian arrow heads, together with the lower half of a stone tomahawk or hatchet, broken in two at the eye. Finally he drew forth something that still more deeply interested his companions.

CHAPTER XI

Clifty Creek and Spring-in-Rock

THE object that O'Reilly drew forth was a block of yellowish gray stone, about six inches long, two inches wide, and an inch and a half high; on top of it, and carved out of the same piece, sat the figure of an Indian near one end, and that of a white man near the other. The figure of the Indian was hollowed out from the top, to form the bowl of a pipe, and in each end of the block of stone was a hole made to receive a pipe stem. The boys gathered eagerly around the schoolmaster and minutely inspected the object. The carving was rude, but by no means clumsy. The Indian was unmistakably an Indian and the white man unmistakably a white man.

"It's a pipe" exclaimed one of the boys.

"Yes, it's a pipe—a pipe of peace," answered O'Reilly. "That is the meaning of the two holes. The pipe was made to be set on the ground between two men; then with a long stem inserted in either end, it could be smoked by the two at the same time."

"It seems to be very, very old," said Kab, inspecting it, and discovering traces of wear upon its surface.

"How old, should you say?" asked the schoolmaster.

"Oh, I don't know. Ages old may be. It might have been made a thousand years ago, or even more."

"Very certainly it was not made even half that long ago," answered O'Reilly. "It tells you that much itself."

"Tells me? How do you mean?"

"Why it tells you, just as plainly as if the figures carved on it could speak. The only trouble is that you are deaf to what it says."

"Well I don't understand that," said Kab, looking still more closely at the pipe.

"Neither do I," said Cate and Jack in a breath. "Tell us why you think it isn't so old as that?"

"It isn't a case of thinking at all," answered the schoolmaster. "It's knowing. I know that pipe isn't a thousand years old, or half a thousand, just as certainly as I know that the sun is shining to-day."

"Oh, I see," exclaimed Pike, a sudden thought lighting up his countenance.

"Out with it then!" said Jack.

"Why there's the figure of a white man c: " See

on it, and the Indians didn't know there was such a thing as a white man in all the world that long ago."

"Right you are, Pike!" exclaimed O'Reilly, approvingly. "The Indian that carved that piece of stone into a pipe couldn't have known anything about white men till two centuries ago, or even later than that. For while the English and French began settling in this northern part of America early in the seventeenth century they did not push out here into what is now southern Indiana till much later than that."

"But the pipe may have been made in Virginia or Massachusetts, and brought out here," suggested Jack.

"It was not," answered O'Reilly. "It tells you that too, only you don't understand its language, and you're not to blame for that."

"Tell us how you know that, please, Mr. O'Reilly," pleaded Pike, whose thirst for knowledge was very keen.

"Why the stone came from the cliffs along Clifty Creek, or from some other place in this neighborhood. It's a kind of rock with sand in it—just the sort that makes up the bulk of the cliffs down ^{tw}here. If you break your way into the rock in some ^{es}end, ⁱalong the upper part of the cliffs, you come to

this sort of rock in a condition so soft that you can cut it with a pocket-knife, but if you expose it to the air for a few days it grows hard, just as this piece has done, and as the exposed parts of it in the cliffs have done. By the way you boys haven't seen the cliffs yet. You'll want to be going to Milford this afternoon to post Pike's letter, and I advise you to walk up the creek under the cliffs instead of following the road. The stream isn't high now, and you'll find enough of margin to walk on, between the water and the foot of the cliffs, I imagine."

"If we don't, we can wade or swim," said Pike enthusiastically. "Come on, boys."

"You're right to be enthusiastic, me boy," said the schoolmaster. "It's a grand sight that you'll have for a mile along this creek. All of you go, and I'll stay here with Nemo to see that the 'possums don't eat up the plows or the 'coons run away with the wagon."

The boys were off in a moment. Following the road to the ford, they there entered the great chasm or canyon through which the creek flowed. It was formed by two nearly perpendicular rock walls, ranging in height from fifty to seventy-five feet, and following the bends of the creek itself.

"Look up there," said Cate, pointing as they stood admiring the grandeur of the scene. "See

how the bushes grow right out of the rock wherever there is a crack or a little ledge. It's very curious."

"It's interesting of course," said Jack, "but I don't think you can call it curious, as bushes always do that. You see there are always nuts and seeds falling from the trees and bushes above, and whenever one of them lodges in a crevice of the cliff it sprouts. If there happens to be a little soil where it sprouts, it puts out roots, shooting them as far into all the crevices as it can, and so a bush or a tree, clinging to the rock is the result. Look at that one just up there," pointing. "It is a good sized young beech-tree, and it is growing on a perfectly bare perpendicular surface of the rock where not another seed has ever found a place to grow. If you look closely you'll see that the tree really comes straight out of the rock, and then turns suddenly upward. I suppose the wind blew a beechnut into a little crack there one day, and it sprouted and grew."

"But where does it get earth enough to live on?" asked Pike. "There can't be much earth in a little crack of that kind."

"No, but the tree doesn't want much earth. There's probably some crumbled shale in there, and that makes a good soil; but the tree doesn't depend upon the soil for its food."

"Where does it get it then?"

"Mainly from the air. Its chief use for the earth is to hold it in place by its roots. If trees drew from the soil all the material they use in growing from little sprouts into big trees, they would exhaust the land on which they grow, and it wouldn't be worth while to clear woodlands in order to make fields. As a matter of fact about the richest lands we have are those from which we cut beech woods away."

"Yes, I know that," said Pike, thoughtfully, "but I don't see just how the trees enrich the soil."

"Why by returning to it every year more than they take from it. You know how the leaves lie knee deep and more in the beech woods every fall. All those leaves rot on the ground and form a very rich soil."

"And the trees get the material to make leaves and bark and wood out of the air?"

"Not all of it, but a great part—so much that the leaves and dead timber rotting on the ground really pay back more than the trees borrowed from the land in the first place. But there is a great difference in trees in that respect. Some kinds take a great deal more from the soil than others do, and return a great deal less to it, and you must remember too that the soil itself takes a great deal from the

air directly, and a good deal more from decaying rocks."

"Why, do rocks rot like wood?"

"No, not like wood, but they rot nevertheless, and most of the land in this part of the country was originally made by the decay of the shale and other rocks. Oh, look there!"

The boys had walked on during this little talk, and they had come now upon a sight that interested them very greatly. It was a large stream of water, shooting straight out of the face of the cliff and falling into the creek. Where the water came out of the cliff it was a "solid" stream, but as it shot out and curved downward it was broken by the resistance of the air into what looked like ropes, and strings and threads of water, until, as it reached the surface of the creek, it had become simply a great splash of very heavy rain.

This curiously interesting spring was known at the time of this story as "Spring-in-Rock." The name has since been changed to "Cliff Spring."

The little company lingered long at Spring-in-Rock, and their study of it set them thinking about springs in general and their peculiarities. Pike especially was bubbling over with questions for the schoolmaster to answer, and after supper that evening he began asking them. He purposely avoided

the subject until then because he wanted to listen attentively and get the full benefit of whatever Mr. O'Reilly might have to tell him. He couldn't do that while all the company were busy preparing supper, eating it, and clearing up after it.

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CHAPTER XII

Pike's Suction Pump

"Now, Mr. O'Reilly," Pike began, when the supper was over, the horses attended to and all things made snug for the night, "won't you please tell us all about springs?"

"Tell you all about springs, is it? Why you young cormorant of information I don't know all about springs or a hundredth part of all. How do you know that I know anything about springs? I tell ye, Pike, your moind's an animated suction pump, and that's as it should be. But you seem to think my moind's an exhaustless reservoir from which you can pump the waters of knowledge without limit. It's not so, I tell you. I'm an exceedingly ignorant man, Pike, just as most men are, but I like your fruitful curiosity and it's always me pleasure to minister to it when I can. So what is it you want to know about springs?"

"Well we've been looking at Spring-in-Rock this afternoon, and it set me thinking."

"That again is quoite as it should be," interrupted

O'Reilly. "But what was it that you were thinking?"

"Oh, a hundred things. For one thing I wonder where the water of a spring comes from, and why some springs dry up sometimes while others flow just as freely after a long, dry summer as in the rainiest weather; and why some springs are very cold, even in hot weather while others seem to follow the weather in that respect, and——"

"Oh stop! stop!" exclaimed the good-natured schoolmaster. "Your catechism's long enough now to need half a dozen evenings for the answers. Let's begin with what you've asked already, and see if I can make you understand.

"You must bear in mind that all the water in all the springs and all the wells was once rain that fell upon the earth—some of it yesterday or last week, some of it a year ago or ten years or ten thousand years. That which we drank at supper to-night fell as rain or snow at least ten thousand years ago."

"But how do you know—"

"Now there ye go, interrupting and asking a new question before I finish answering the old one. Wait and listen, and maybe we'll come to that before we grow sleepy. Let me resume. The water that falls upon the earth in the shape of rain or snow, is disposed of in three ways. Some of it runs

off into streams which finally reach the sea, where the water is taken up again in the form of vapor and brought back to us in clouds. You know about that. Some of the water is taken up in the same way from the soil, directly. The rest of it sinks into the soil and through it till it reaches rocks that it can't get through. Now you must bear in mind that water, when left to itself, always runs down hill—under ground just the same as above ground. Every soldier knows that, and when soldiers go into camp and don't know where water is, they always send men to walk down hill and keep on walking down hill till they come to the water. So after water sinks through the soil it keeps on down till it comes to a rock that it can't get through. Then it follows that down, down, down, as long as there is any down. If it comes to a crack or fissure in the rock over whose surface it is flowing, it leaks through that and goes on till it comes to another rock, and so on. Now in running down along the surface of a rock, or between two rock ledges, the water sometimes comes to a place where it can break through into the air again. That makes a spring. Sometimes the water of a spring flows out through a crack in the rock, sometimes it slips out of the soil above the rock, and sometimes it bubbles up through sand, because it comes from a basin that is higher than the

spot where it bubbles up. In every case it's just water seeking its level by running down hill. A well is the same as a spring, except that the water in a well hasn't found an outlet, and so you dig for it."

"I understand that," said Pike reflectively.
"But please go on."

"Well some springs are simply water leaking out of the soil on a side hill. In dry weather the soil dries up and the springs of that kind dry up. Their water is always warm or cold according to the weather. Other springs flow from great underground reservoirs that lie too far below the surface to be affected by the weather above. Such springs remain at about the same temperature always. Finally there are springs, and ours down the hill there is one of them, which are always as cold as ice water for the simple reason that they *are* ice water."

"How do you mean? Where is the ice?" asked Jack.

"I don't know where the ice is. It may be a mile away from the spring, or it may be hundreds of miles away. I only know that that spring flows from a slowly melting mass of ice which lies somewhere deep in the earth, but at a place higher than the spring. As the ice melts the water from it begins

hunting for a lower level. It gets itself penned up between two strata or beds of rock, or in some crack in the rock, and keeps on flowing until it reaches the outlet that constitutes our spring. It is very little warmer when it comes out at the spring than it was when it started at the foot of the bed of ice, wherever that may be, because the underground stream that brings it to us lies too far beneath the surface of the earth to be affected by the weather above."

"But, Mr. O'Reilly" interrupted Pike, the questioner, "How does the ice get there? If it's too deep in the earth to feel the weather, how did it come to freeze where it is?"

"That's why I said that the water in our spring fell as rain or snow thousands of years ago," answered the schoolmaster. "Ye must know that there was a time, thousands of years ago, when all this part of the country was covered with ice hundreds or thousands of feet thick. There was a great cap of ice around the north pole, just as there is now, only it was much greater then than it is now. This ice cap stretched away southward. Ye must understand that ice flows down hill, just as water does, only that its motion is very much slower. Well down this way, toward the southern edge of the ice cap, the ice flowed into the lower valleys, pushing out great spurs from the main body till the

cap was like a great bowl with its edge scolloped and fringed. One of the great ice points stretched down over this part of Indiana, burying the land deep in ice, and plowing out vast furrows as it slowly moved on. When at last the ice cap slowly melted away, beginning at its southern border, there were great floods of water formed, and these carried vast quantities of earth and bowlders and even great masses of rock with them. Sometimes these masses would lodge on top of the ice in valleys, and bury it far under ground, where it would require ages to melt away. Our spring flows from some such mass of ice somewhere—we can't tell where."

"Was all of Indiana covered with ice that way?" asked Pike.

"No, but the greater part of it and of the states and territories round about it was."

"How do we know that? How has it been found out?"

"Simply by observing the character of the country and its rocks. The great masses of ice, called glaciers, were incalculably heavy, of course, and as they moved slowly on, they tore the rocks beneath them to fragments, and by rolling the fragments along, grinding them between the ice above and the rocks beneath, rounded them into bowlders, or pulverized them into sand. The mass of great bowlders

and lesser bowlders and cobble-stones and pebbles and sand was spread out over the land wherever the ice crust went, forming what we call ‘drift.’ In the course of ages much of the drift was deeply covered with earth, but in digging wells we find it where the glaciers placed it. Wherever we find the drift formation, we know the ice once was, and in those parts of the country where there is no drift, we know there was never any great ice cap. Now it’s growing late, and we’ve work to do in the morning. So I’m not going to talk any more to-night. Besides your curiosity must be satisfied and even satiated by this time.”

“I don’t know what ‘satiated’ means,” answered Pike, “but anyhow I haven’t got enough. But there’s a long winter coming and maybe——”

“O you’ll foind me doing plenty of talking from time to time,” said the schoolmaster, as he wrapped himself in his blanket.

CHAPTER XIII

Prejudice and Provisions

DAYLIGHT the next morning found breakfast ready in the little camp, for the boys were farmers now, and the farmer who would thrive must be out and at work as soon as there is daylight enough to see by.

"Kab" said Jack, as they sat at breakfast. "You and I will set to work with the plows this morning, two horses to each. Pike, you'd better take your gun and go into the woods for an hour or two. Our supply of fresh meat has run out, and we simply mustn't touch the bacon or the salt pork, except in extreme necessity. We haven't more than enough of them to insure us against starvation during the severest winter storms when we can get nothing else, and as for buying, we can't afford it."

"How much money have we, Jack, anyhow?" asked Cate.

"Very little, and there are a good many things we must buy. I mean to have a cow for one thing, and we've got to buy corn and fodder for the horses

all winter, unless we sell them. And we must buy seed wheat, seed corn, seed potatoes, and the like in the spring. So our rule must be to get our own living as best we can till we grow a crop."

"Now that's right as a general proposition," broke in the schoolmaster. "Let me tell you how to do it. You know I've had experience, and experience has taught me a good deal. The true way to get on comfortably on meagre resources, is to limit your wants to what you have or can get. They call that 'reconciling yourself with your environment,' but in plain English it means using your common sense. Every man is poor when he wants things that he can't get, and every man is rich when he doesn't. That's the true philosophy. Never bother to want anything that you can't have, and you'll always have all you want. Nobody can be richer than the man who has all he wants. Now the practical application of this philosophy is that you should stop having coffee with your meals, and stop it now. Put away the few pounds of it that you've got in the wagon, and save it for use in case anybody should be sick."

The boys agreed to this, and Jack went on to mark out the day's duties. "While Kab and I are plowing" he said, "the rest of you can set to work chopping down trees over there just west of the house. It's mixed timber and not very heavy,

so that will be the easiest field to clear, besides which it has other advantages."

"What are they, Jack?" asked Cate.

"Well for one thing it lies very near the house place, and so there won't be much trouble in dragging logs from there to build the house and the stables with. For another thing there are a good many ash trees there, and they are the easiest to split into rails for the fences we'll have to build in the spring. Then again there's a good deal of straight young hickory there that is specially good for house building, because of its durability. That and walnut and blue ash are the most durable woods we have. Properly cared for, a house built of them will last through generations."

Then Jack asked Cate, Pike and the schoolmaster to walk with him into the woods so that he might give them particular directions, as to the sorting of timber for various uses. He had taken pains to learn all he could on that subject by inquiry among experienced men before starting out on this expedition. He showed his companions what sorts and sizes of trees they should cut into proper lengths for building the house; what trees they should make into rails, and much else of the sort. Especially he blocked out large chips from certain of the trees, and by splitting them into thin sheets, satisfied himself

with respect to their "grains." Selecting some of these he bade the boys saw them into blocks each eighteen inches long, saying:

"These will split well, and we'll rive shingles out of them, to roof with. We'll do that evenings."

Having given all needed instructions, Jack set off with Kab to begin the plowing, and Pike, after clearing away the breakfast dishes, called Nemo to accompany him into the woods in search of game. Cate and the schoolmaster got out the axes, mauls, wedges and a large cross-cut saw, and set to work upon the trees.

An hour or two later Pike, who was a 'born huntsman, returned heavily laden with game. He had twenty or thirty squirrels, about a dozen partridges, and a raccoon. This last animal is rarely seen in day-time, and is hunted only with dogs at night. But in this case Nemo had discovered a 'coon that had evidently overstayed his time, at the Lodge perhaps, and the vigilant dog quickly drove him up a tree that had no hole for the 'coon to hide in. Pike shot him at once, and having killed him, determined to take the carcass home for the sake of the skin, which when properly dried and cured, could be sold for twenty-five or fifty cents.

"And why should we not eat the baste?" quickly asked O'Reilly when Pike made his report.

" Eat it? why 'coons aren't fit to eat," answered the boy in astonishment.

" Now will you plaze tell me why not ? "

" I don't know. Only that's what everybody says."

" Not everybody,—only everybody in this part of the country, and that's only because of ignorance and prejudice. In many parts of the country there's a similar prejudice against squirrels and—"

" Squirrels? Why I thought everybody liked squirrels. They're dainties."

" Nevertheless there are some parts of the country in which the people would as soon eat rats as squirrels, and there are some parts of the country in which the raccoon is esteemed as a rare delicacy which in fact it is. Even here people eat opossums and think them very dainty eating, and yet the food of the 'coon is precisely the same as that of the 'possum. They are both clean feeders. They live mainly on nuts and grain. Now and then they kill and eat a chicken, but they never eat any but freshly killed meat. It's all a matter of prejudice, I tell you. So go back to the fire and clane your 'coon, and roast him for dinner, and if you don't admit that his flesh is a toothsome, juicy viand, then I'll ate the whole baste meself, and be none the worse for it."

The schoolmaster was apt to lapse into his strong-

est brogue whenever he spoke earnestly. Upon thinking the matter over Pike could see no reason why the raccoon should not be good for food, and so when the time came he roasted this one for a dinner to which every member of the little party brought a keen appetite. Long before the dinner was ended there remained in the minds and mouths of the boys no lingering trace of the prejudice which holds raccoons to be unfit to eat. On the contrary they decided to go upon a night hunt for both 'coons and 'possums before many days should pass.

CHAPTER XIV

Plans and a Visitor

A LITTLE before nightfall of that day, Jack and Kab quitted their plowing and hurried to what the boys had begun to call "headquarters," for want of a better term. Hastily summoning the others Jack explained:

"We're going to have a big Fall rain, and it's coming to-night. We must make a shelter at once. Quit everything else and get to work. Cut some forks and poles, Kab—you know how,—and you and I'll set them. The rest of you bring brush as fast as you can—brush with the leaves on."

The shelter when finished, was a very rude, temporary structure, consisting of brush, spread top downward, over a rack of hastily put up poles. It was enclosed only on three sides—the front being open to the fire.

"This thing won't last long," said Cate, looking it over after a late supper had been cooked and eaten. "That brush will lose its leaves pretty soon, and then we might as well sleep under the sky, so far as shelter from rain and wind is concerned."

"That is very true, Cate," answered Jack. "It is also true that the good hearty supper you've just eaten, won't keep off hunger for more than a dozen hours to come. Still it answers your present purposes, and our shelter does the same."

"I see," said Cate, in a chastened tone. "I'll wash my face and hands again in the morning, though I did that thoroughly this evening. But with winter not very far off I suppose we're going to build some sort of house to live in during the cold weather—a log cabin or something."

"We'll do nothing in that direction," said Jack, "till we get our turnip patch plowed and harrowed and seeded. After that we'll run up a log cabin to live in till we get mother's house built."

"Not if I'm boss of the job," interrupted Kab, to whom the boys always assigned the direction of every task that required anything of mechanical ingenuity.

"What's your plan, Kab?" asked Pike who saw that his brother had wrought out their problem in his own mind.

"Well," said Kab, "it's simple enough. We are going to build a double, hewed-log house, two stories high, for mother and the girls, and we expect to get it ready for them by the beginning of summer, or the middle of summer at the latest. In the same

way we are going to build a barn and a stable, not here but over on the next hill—because mother don't like stables too near the house. But neither the house nor the barn can be ready before spring, and in the meanwhile we've got a lot of work to do. So we don't want to waste any time or work. We've got to have some sort of place for ourselves and some place for the horses to live in during the winter, but we can provide for all that without building either a log cabin or a log stable, and we can do it with less than a quarter—yes, less than a tenth the time and labor."

"How, Kab?" Jack asked the question.

"Why now that the boys have begun cutting and trimming trees, we have unlimited brush of every kind and size. It's easy to bring here from the clearing, and I propose to build our winter quarters and stables with it."

"But how?"

"By setting poles in the ground and weaving brush into them so as to make a wicker work. Then we'll make another wicker wall of the same kind about a foot outside of the first, and we'll tie the two firmly together with grape vines. Then we'll fill in the space between with dry leaves in the case of the stables, and with earth in the case of the house. I can manage a window opening or two, and we'll

put greased cotton cloth in the windows instead of glass. Three or four days' work will finish the job, while it would take us as many weeks to do the thing with logs for walls."

Just at this point in the conversation a visitor rode up and dismounted. He was pretty wet, for the downpour of rain had begun, but he didn't seem to mind that. He was a breezy wholesome-looking gentleman, of sixty years perhaps.

"I'm Captain Will Lambert," he said by way of introducing himself. "I'm your nearest neighbor and as I happen to be the 'oldest inhabitant' of Decatur county, I've called to tell you I want to be neighborly if you'll let me. I've brought you something to chew on—a bushel of apples—'red insides' I call them because the color reaches to the core. It's a seedling of my own growing."

A little while sufficed to make the boys acquainted with their neighbor over whose ruddy, good-humored countenance, Cate afterwards said, "the smiles seemed to be chasing butterflies all the time."

But what this night visitor had to say before he rode away, was of considerable consequence to the Shelby boys.

CHAPTER XV

The Oldest Inhabitant

CAPTAIN LAMBERT was, as he had said, the “oldest inhabitant” of that region, though he was certainly not a very old man. He had won his title of Captain by service in the war of 1812.

“I knew your father,” he said to the boys, “long before you were born, and I knew him until the time of his death. He and I were boys together in Kentucky, and we served together in the Late War.” At that time and for long afterward, the war of 1812 was always called “the Late War” throughout the West. The captain continued his story:

“I came to this part of the country many years ago, when there wasn’t a white man within twenty-five miles of where we are now sitting. I had just married and my wife and I hadn’t a dollar to bless ourselves with. We had borrowed a few bed-clothes, and I had an ax, a pair of wedges and not much else except health and strength and courage. I put up a little one-room earth-floored, log cabin to live in and set to work to clear some land. I didn’t

stop even to make a door for the cabin, and the wolves used to gather around the place of nights and howl at the fire which they could see through the open doorway. We knew they wouldn't come in, and when bedtime came we used to hang a quilt over the door opening. It was pretty hard living during that first year, but we got through it and I grew a little crop while my wife made a garden. After that first crop came in we were never really poor again, because we had enough to eat, and little by little I built a better house to live in. That house has been growing ever since, as the children came and we grew better off. Of course I extended my clearings and got rid of stumps until now anybody in the county will tell you there isn't a better farm than mine in Southern Indiana. You see we've always gone on the principle of doing everything we can for ourselves and going without the rest. We grow our own wheat, corn and potatoes, raise our own hogs, cattle and sheep, card and spin our own wool, weave our own cloth, and all the rest of it. We buy coffee and salt, and not much else. The fact is one doesn't need to buy much else if he works hard on a good farm in a country like this. Of course we've put away money from time to time, and so people say we're almost rich now, but that only means that we're able to have pretty much anything

we care to have. So we're trying to give our children the best education we can, and that brings me to something I want to say. My two boys are just about starting to Kentucky to attend a boarding school there, and as my four other children are girls I'm a trifle short of help on the farm this fall. The boys and I have grown a very large crop of corn and potatoes, but the boys can't be here to help gather the crop. Now it occurs to me that you boys will need some corn and fodder and potatoes, and I don't suppose you've any too much money to buy such things with?"

"No," answered Jack, "we have hardly any money at all, and so I've about made up my mind to sell the horses because we can't afford to winter them."

"Don't sell. You'll need them in clearing and house building, and in your crops when you plant them next spring. You can winter them easily enough if you're willing to work for them as they work for you."

"How do you mean, captain?"

"Why my corn will be ready to cut about two weeks from now. I always like to cut corn as soon as it ripens, because of the difference in the fodder. If corn is cut early the fodder is perfect; if the corn stands too long after it is ripe, the fodder dries up

and isn't worth much. Now if you boys choose to cut and shock my corn crop for me, you shall be paid 'in kind,' as we say here where there is so little money. That is to say one shock in every ten that you cut, shall be yours for wages. That's what farmers here always pay for cutting and shocking when they have to hire the work done, and it is just about fair wages. In that way you'll lay in enough corn and fodder for the whole winter. Then, if you choose to dig my potatoes when the time comes, you shall have one-fifteenth of them for your work—that's the usual rate, and it'll give you all the potatoes you'll want for your own use and for seed in the spring."

"You are very generous, certainly," said Jack, "and—"

"I'm not generous at all in the matter. It's a fair bargain. I hire you to do work that I must get somebody to do and I pay you the regular wages. If I can't hire you, why I must hire some one else at the same wages, or more likely leave the best part of the work undone, as it is very hard to hire anybody in a country where everybody has about all he can do to get his own crops in."

"All the same," said Jack, "you're helping us out of our greatest difficulty, and we will cut your corn and dig your potatoes on the terms offered."

"Very well. That's business. Now there's another thing that isn't business at all. I've always been an orchard planter, just as your father was, and as I advise you to be as soon as you get your fields open. There's no market for apples this year; the crop all over the country is so large that the price is low in Cincinnati, and of course the river country more than supplies the demand. It would cost more to haul apples from here to Cincinnati than the apples would bring, after they got there. My girls dry a great many, and they make all the apple butter we can use, but the bigger half of my apples this year will rot on the trees, although I'm giving my hogs all they can stuff themselves with. So if you boys want a winter's supply of apples, you've only to bring your wagon over, pick as many loads as you choose, haul them home, and put them in holes just as you'll do with your potatoes. You're welcome and more than welcome to all you want."

It was the custom in that part of the country to secure potatoes against frost by storing them in what were called "potato holes." A deep round hole was dug in the ground, ten or twelve feet across at the top and tapering to a point below. This was lined with straw, cornstalks or dry leaves, and filled with potatoes till they rose in a cone high above the surface of the ground. Then they were covered

with cornstalks, straw or leaves, over which the earth was shoveled to a thickness of several feet. Potatoes thus protected would keep perfectly all winter. When any of them were wanted, a small hole was dug at the bottom of the conical mound, and after the potatoes wanted were taken out, the hole was covered as closely as ever. In bitterly cold weather it was the rule not to open the hole, but to go without potatoes till more moderate weather should set in, lest the frost should get in and destroy the precious store. Sometimes apples were kept through the winter in the same way, and that is what Captain Lambert suggested that the boys should do.

After he had asked the boys all about their plans and had made such suggestions as his experience prompted him to offer, he took his leave. It was what Pike always called "sleepy time" when he left, but there was no sleep in the eyes of the company. This offer of Captain Lambert's was so great a piece of good fortune that for at least an hour afterward they sat before their fire discussing it.

"It's just like him," said the schoolmaster. "He's the foremost man in this county, and he deserves to be. He has a cheery word and a smiling face for everybody, and whenever anybody hereabouts is in trouble, it is to Captain Will Lambert that he appeals. He'd have given you boys all that

corn and potatoes, if there hadn't been a way for you to earn them. You're fortunate in having him for a friend. And moind ye, ye must meet him half-way. Ye'll recognize his friendship as a fact, and you'll be wise to go to him for all the advice and counsel you may need. Ye've heard of 'Nature's Noblemen.' Well he's one of them."

CHAPTER XVI

An Anonymous Letter

JACK's big turnip patch was seeded within the time he had hoped, and then the entire party set to work upon the cabin that was to serve them as their home during the winter. Cate, Pike and the school-master had got its construction well under way indeed, before the other two finished their plowing and harrowing, so that with all five at work upon it the task was done by the end of the week.

The building was constructed after the plan agreed upon. The walls were made of two thicknesses of wicker work, set ten or twelve inches apart with the space between filled in with earth. A little ingenuity on Kab's part, enabled him to leave two window spaces and a door space. The window spaces were to be covered with thin muslin, greased to make it more nearly transparent, and a door was to be made of clapboards. The roof also was covered with clapboards which the boys split out for the purpose. The window spaces must remain open until the muslin could be bought in Greensburg, whither, as

we know, the boys must go on the next Monday, to give their testimony against the horse thief.

On Friday it rained heavily, much to Jack's delight because of his turnip patch, but the rain did not prevent Pike from trudging through the mud to Milford. For on Friday of every week, the mail came in, and the boys were anxious for news from home.

Pike brought back two letters. One of them was the expected missive from Vevay. The other was a letter addressed to Jack in printing letters, evidently to disguise the writer's hand. Originally it had been addressed to Milford, which was not the proper name of the post-office there, for the reason that there was another village of that name in Indiana, and the government never allows two post-offices of the same name in any one state. So, with ink of a different color, some one had scratched out the word "Milford" and written instead "Cliffty"—mis-spelling the name with two f's instead of one.

On the whole the odd-looking letter, which, contrary to custom, was prepaid, excited a good deal of curiosity on Pike's part, as he carried it home. It had been mailed at a post-office called "Mixter," of which Pike had never heard. Obviously, however, it was a very small post-office, too small to be provided with a dating stamp, for both the name of the office with the date of mailing, and the words "Paid

five cents," had been written by the postmaster with a pen.

When Pike reached home and Jack opened the letter he found that the inside, like the outside of it, was done in rudely formed printing letters. There was no date, no address, no signature, and this is what the letter said:

" You an them brothers uv yourn better not go to givin no evidents agin Hi Jenkins You better fergit what happened ef you know what's good fer yer holesum. A winks as good as a nod."

" It is a threat," said Jack, passing the letter to the others to read. " It comes from a man whose education has been a good deal neglected in the matters of grammar and spelling."

" Of course we'll pay no attention to it," said Cate, who was a born fighter. " Even if I didn't have to go to court and give my testimony, and if I hadn't meant to go I'd go after a threat of that kind."

" Of course we'll all go," said Jack. " We're not cowards to be scared by an anonymous threat."

Meanwhile Pike was studying the letter closely. Presently he said:

" Maybe the bad spelling and the bad grammar

are pretended, just as the handwriting is. It looks that way to me anyhow."

"How do you mean, Pike?" asked the schoolmaster leaning over and scanning the sheet over the boy's shoulder.

"Why you see a man as ignorant as this one pretends to be wouldn't have done his bad spelling in just this way. A man who couldn't spell 'of,' would certainly have broken down over 'brothers,' and a man who writes 'holesum' for 'wholesome' would hardly have got the two p's and the 'ed' into 'happened.'"

"That's very true, Poike, me boy," said the schoolmaster. "And no man so ignorant as to spell 'evidence' with a 't' and an 's,' instead of 'ce' at the end of it would have got the rest of the word right. Then again this fellow knows how to spell the words 'you' and 'know' correctly. No really illiterate person ever manages that. You're en-toirely right, Poike. The man who wrote that letter is far less ignorant than he pretends to be. His bad spelling and his bad English have been assumed for the occasion and rather clumsily at that."

"But this letter comes from some friend of that ignorant 'fellow in jail at Greensburg,'" objected Jack, "and he's not a man likely to have educated friends."

"Friends, no. But you see he's a member of a gang, and it's just about the wildest gang that ever existed in these parts. There's somebody with brains at the head of it and directing its operations. If there weren't the officers of the law would have broken it up long ago."

"Still," said Jack doubtfully, "he might have shrewd intelligence without being educated. Many men do, you know. Brains don't teach a man to spell. He must learn that out of a book, and I can't imagine an educated man turning criminal."

"Oh, it's often so. Many of the greatest criminals in history have been not only educated but highly cultivated men. However you're right in a general way perhaps. Low criminals are generally ignorant men, but that's not always the case. At any rate the man who wrote that letter knows the English language a good deal better than he wants us to think he does."

"I'll keep the letter, anyhow," said Jack, "and see what comes of it." Presently he added: "And I'll pick up a few more dogs, just as a reinforcement for Nemo. With three or four wolf dogs enlisted in our service we shan't have to stand guard either by night or by day. Even with Nemo alone on duty ,it wouldn't be comfortable for anybody to

come fooling round this cabin without introducing himself to the family."

" You think then that we're likely to be attacked here?" asked Pike, instinctively glancing at the four guns hanging upon hooks against the newly built cabin wall.

" Not attacked in any open way," answered Jack, " but after we give our testimony at Greensburg, those rascals may send somebody up here to set fire to our things, or to injure us in some other sneaking way. Against that danger dogs are a better protection than any number of guns. You can't sneak on a dog as you can on a man. So while we're down Greensburg way, I mean to spend a dollar or two on dogs if I can find any good ones whose masters will part with them."

" Perhaps we might find some around here, nearer home," suggested Pike. " Every house seems to have half a dozen at least—even the two or three houses in Milford."

" Yes, but if we get dogs in this neighborhood, they will run away and go to their old homes. So when we go to Greensburg on Monday, we must all be on the lookout for dogs that we can buy. Every farmer who happens to be in town that day will have one or more with him."

CHAPTER XVII

Jack Shelby, Orator

THE boys started for Greensburg early on Monday morning, leaving the schoolmaster and Nemo in charge of things at home. They might have ridden the four horses, but they decided to walk instead, partly because the horses had worked very hard at the plowing, after their heavy work in hauling the wagon from Vevay, and partly because if they should ride the horses they must pay a quarter for feeding each of them there—or a dollar in all—and they had no dollars to waste in that way. So starting early and carrying their own dinners, just as country schoolboys do, they walked to the county seat, and got there before the court opened.

They found the village in a state of intense excitement. Apparently all the farmers for many miles around were there, most of them having brought their wives and children with them, besides their dogs. The men were moving about angrily, with set lips and determined countenances. They talked little, and that only in low tones, as men are apt to do

who have something serious on their minds. The women, gathered in excited groups, seemed at a first glance to be gossiping, but a closer observation showed clearly that their talk was of some momentous affair, and not of mere tittle-tattle.

After a little while the boys learned what was the matter.

News had reached Greensburg on the evening before the boys got there, that a mail stage-coach had been attacked and robbed two days before on the National road, at a point about thirty miles north of Greensburg. Worse still, and to the sorrow of the boys as of all the good people of Decatur county, it was reported that the Greensburg judge, with whom the boys had taken supper only a week before, had been a passenger on the coach and had been killed in the fight with the robber band. He had adjourned court on Thursday, to resume its sitting on Monday, and in the meanwhile had gone to attend to some business in another county. It was during that journey that he took passage on the stage for a twenty-mile trip, and it was thus that he happened to be present at the time of the robbery and to meet his death in the mêlée.

The judge was greatly loved and honored in his own county and in the region round about, so that the news of his death brought a sense of personal

bereavement to all the people there. Accordingly everybody went to Greensburg on that Monday morning, and everybody was excited and angry.

As the circumstances of the case were discussed with the United States Deputy Marshals who had been sent to investigate, public opinion in Greensburg began to settle down to the conviction that the robbery had really been planned in part, if not altogether, for the purpose of murdering the Judge. He had been very active in his efforts, both official and personal, to break up the gang that was terrorizing that region and to bring its members to justice. It was the popular belief, therefore, that the gang had followed him on this journey for the express purpose of making an end of him. He had ridden from Greensburg to the National road in company with friends, but on reaching that highway he had parted with these friends. To spare his horse he had taken the stage coach to his destination, and on the return journey he had been one of only two passengers carried by the coach, the other being a complete stranger to the stage driver. When the coach was attacked and looted of its mail-bags, the judge was shot to death, and the other passenger disappeared—the driver could not say how or whither.

As the details of this news were passed from mouth to mouth among the people gathered in

Greensburg, their anger grew greater and greater. It was not a noisy anger, and it was all the more dangerous on that account. For when the indignation of a crowd finds expression in clamorous speech it is apt to evaporate quickly. When an angry populace refrains from loud speech, its anger is apt to find expression in acts of a violent kind.

On this occasion Jack and his brothers observed that men gathered in very small groups at first and talked in low tones to each other as if in consultation. After a while the several small groups united, forming three or four larger ones, and still their talking was done in low tones and in few words. A little later still all the groups came together as if in obedience to a summons from some authority, recognized by all. Then all talking ceased, except that those who seemed to be the leaders now and then muttered an order or a caution, as the crowd of men, in silent and angry determination moved toward the jail, while the women retired to the row of vehicles that stood near the public horse racks.

Observing the men curiously, Pike presently saw that at least half a dozen of them carried coils of rope in their hands, although neither of the boys had seen any of them go in search of rope.

"What are they going to do, Jack?" asked Pike in a tremor of excitement.

"They're going to take our prisoner out of jail and hang him if they can," answered Jack. "Come on! We must join the sheriff's posse and help prevent a lynching."

Skirting the crowd, the boys presented themselves to the sheriff with an offer to help him preserve order and protect the jail.

Everybody in the town was of one opinion now. There was no doubt in any mind that the stage robbery had been committed and the judge murdered by the robber gang that had so long infested the region round about, and there was equally no doubt in any mind that the prisoner who had been caught by the Shelby boys was an active member of that gang. So it had been agreed among the people that they would take the prisoner from the jail, tie a rope around his neck and then give him his choice between telling all he knew about the gang and its members, and being hanged to the nearest tree for his refusal to tell. The mob had decided that this was the only way to break up the band. If the prisoner would give up the names of all his associates in crime, and himself leave the state at once, they would turn him loose. If he refused, they would hang him.

It was the sheriff's duty to prevent this lawless proceeding and protect his prisoner, and he had a

legal right to summon to his aid any and every citizen he might call upon. He had promptly made such a call, but only half a dozen men had obeyed the summons, and it was doubtful that all of these would stand against the far greater numbers of the angry mob. The sheriff would therefore have welcomed the reinforcement offered by the Shelby boys, but they were unarmed and he had no weapons with which to arm them.

When he explained this, Jack answered:

"Then I'll speak to them. Maybe I can persuade them not to do this horrible thing."

Instantly he went forward, carrying a stool which the sheriff gave him to stand upon, and mounting it he faced the angry mob. Had anybody else attempted thus to delay them in their purpose by speech-making, they would simply have pushed him out of the way like a weed. But with Jack Shelby the case was different. He began right, by calling out:

"Fellow citizens, I have a right to be heard in this case."

Everybody recognized that right. Nobody in the crowd intended to let anything Jack Shelby might say influence the outcome of the affair, but everybody felt at least that "the boy has a right to his say," and so the mob halted to listen. Jack had

never attempted to make a speech before, but now he had his subject and his whole soul was stirred by it. He spoke with intense purpose and therefore he spoke well. He forgot all about himself, and thought only of the end he was trying to accomplish. He spoke passionately, for his very soul was enlisted in his endeavor to prevent what he justly regarded as a deliberate murder. He was not embarrassed by any bashful self-consciousness or any care for what his auditors might think of his speech as such. Indeed he was not conscious that he was making a "speech" at all. He was simply trying to save a human life, and to persuade the men before him not to commit a crime.

"That man in there," he said, "is a criminal, but that is no reason why we should make ourselves worse criminals, and that is what we shall be doing if we lynch him. We shall all be murderers and cowardly murderers at that, for the man you are planning to kill is perfectly helpless in your hands. He can't even fight for his life as a wild beast might. It would be the rankest kind of cowardice to take advantage of your numbers in that way, giving the man no chance for his life. You wouldn't treat even a wolf with such unfairness as that. Besides **that man** has committed no crime that your law punishes with death, and you should remember that

it is *you* the people of Indiana who make the laws of Indiana. We have made laws, saying that horse stealing shall be punished, not by death, but by a long term of imprisonment, and not by a mob, but by the verdict of a jury after a fair trial."

Jack went on arguing, pleading and using plain language, such as those frontier farmers liked and could understand.

"If you do this thing to-day every man of you will go home a murderer to-night, and will never cease to be a murderer so long as he lives. Men and brethren, I beg, I entreat you to think better of this thing. Leave that man to be tried by the courts and you may be sure he will get all the punishment that his crime deserves."

Jack saw that his passionate appeal was having its influence upon the better and more thoughtful men of the crowd. These were evidently wavering in their minds. The more violent men made the same discovery and feared its effect. They began to shout protests against the delay and to clamor for a rush upon the jail, with the heavy pole which they planned to use as a battering-ram in beating down the doors.

Suddenly a new inspiration came to Jack Shelby, and he desperately acted upon it. Raising his right hand in an appeal for silence he shouted:

"Listen to me one more minute. I've something to tell you that you don't know. *I have in my possession a clue with which, if you spare this man now and leave his punishment to the courts, I CAN AND WILL DISCOVER THE NAME AND RESIDENCE OF EVERY MAN WHO BELONGS TO THIS ROBBER GANG!* That is what you want, isn't it—to break the gang up, root and branch? If you do as I beg you to do now, I *promise you* that within a few months, **EVERY MAN** belonging to the gang shall be in jail awaiting trial—every one of them who doesn't save himself by leaving this part of the country between two days."

That stroke was effective. It appealed to the common interest irresistibly. There were hurried consultations, and slowly the mob began to dissolve again into groups. The day was won, and Jack Shelby was rejoiced at that, but when he reflected upon the promise he had made and upon the difficulties that must stand in the way of its fulfilment, he was oppressed in spirit, like one who suddenly finds himself saddled with a burden of responsibility greater than he can bear.

CHAPTER XVIII

Jack Secures an Ally

OF course Jack was beset with questions as to what his plan was, what information he had, and much else of the sort. To all these he made answer that it would not do to tell what he knew or how he intended to proceed, and that was so obviously true that even the most eager questioners saw the necessity for silence on his part.

When he made known his desire to buy two or three good wolf dogs it was assumed at once that he meant somehow to use them in running the thieves down, and as pretty nearly every farmer there had dogs to spare, a number of the animals were pressed upon him without any charge at all, and from among them he selected two powerful and ferocious young beasts, naming them "Caesar" and "Pompey." The man who had given him Caesar quite mistook the meaning and spelling of the name, but he thought it a very fit one indeed. "He's a *seizer* sure enough," the man said, "and whatever he seizes he holds on to like fevernager itself!"

Jack smiled at the man's mistake, but he did not correct it. As there was no judge now to hold court, of course the horse thief's trial must be postponed, and the Shelby boys were free to return home at once. But Jack had some matters to attend to before leaving Greensburg, so he bade the others take the dogs, and go home without waiting for him. As he gave them this instruction and added:

"I'll be home as soon as I can—look for me when you see me," the boys were impressed with a certain change that seemed to have come over him. He seemed much older than he had been—as if he had suddenly changed from a boy into a mature man, resolute, self-reliant, masterful. The change in him was real enough. He had that day undergone an experience that had ripened his mind and character suddenly. He had done the strenuous work of a strong man. He had taken his place among men and had assumed the right to speak to them as one of themselves. He had undertaken a part indeed that very few of them could have fulfilled so well as he had done. He had influenced public opinion at a critical moment, and controlled popular action as no other man in that community could have done. In brief he had suddenly discovered his own maturity of manhood, and the experience of that day had wrought a notable change not only in his feelings, but

in his attitude of mind toward himself, toward others, and toward life. The boy in him had stepped aside and the grown man had taken his place. Henceforth Jack Shelby would play a different part from any that he had played before. He would be no less modest than he had been, but he would feel himself stronger. He had hitherto thought of himself as a boy, scarcely entitled to any free expression of opinion in the presence of his elders; he would henceforth think of himself as one standing upon an equality with those elders. Moreover his success in influencing the crowd by his words, had revealed to him a strength and capacity in himself, of which he had not before even dreamed, except as of something that might come to him in the far future. He had made himself a conscious part of human affairs, an influence and a power among men, and after that change once occurs in a boy's life, he can never again lapse into his former attitude of waiting and shrinking expectancy.

Jack Shelby did not thus analyze the change that had taken place in himself. Indeed he did not clearly recognize the fact that any change had occurred. But it was with a new dignity and confidence that he turned now to the duty that remained to be done.

His first thought was to ask aid of the United States Deputy Marshals who had been sent to in-

vestigate the mail coach robbery, and to that end he sought out their chief, one Bill Grimly. He found him to be an arrogant, self-sufficient, boastful personage, with whom he felt it necessary to deal very cautiously. Grimly began by saying :

“ That was a pretty bold bluff you put up, pard. Of course you didn’t mean it.”

“ I did mean it—every word of it. That is why I asked for this talk with you. I want your help.”

“ Well, what’s your plan? ”

The man’s tone and manner inspired Jack with even more of distrust than he had felt before. It suddenly occurred to him that he mustn’t be too free with his explanations, until he should know more about Grimly. At present he knew nothing about him except that he lived in the town of Napoleon, a place that at that time bore a not very good name among the people of Southern Indiana. He was not known to many among the people who had gathered at Greensburg that day.

Feeling, rather than thinking of the danger that might lie in being too communicative with this man, Jack evaded his question, saying :

“ My plan isn’t fully formed yet, and even if it were it would be subject to change according to circumstances. What I want now is to know

whether or not you will join me in my efforts and give me the best assistance you can."

"I can't answer that," said Grimly, "till I know what you intend to do. Tell me your plans, and above all tell me what clue it is you have,—if you really have any at all, and weren't just bluffing. When you tell me that I'll be able to decide what I'll do and what I won't do."

"I don't care to speak yet of my information or my plans" answered Jack, who had about decided that he would not have Grimly work with him in any case. "But if you'll join me in earnest, I'll tell you what to do fast enough."

"Oh, that's your lay, is it? You want me to work under your orders while you boss the job. Well, I won't do it, that's all. I'm chief deputy United States Marshal for this district, and I'm not going to put myself under the orders of any Hoosier boy, even if his tongue is hung in the middle so as to wag at both ends. Besides this isn't my business. I'm a United States official, looking out for the men who robbed the United States Mail. I've got nothing to do with catching horse thieves or breaking up a gang of local robbers. Still if you'll tell me what you know, I'll give you the benefit of my experience, and maybe that'll help you."

"Oh very well then," said Jack. "You're not

disposed to assist me although everybody is convinced that if you catch this gang of horse thieves and highwaymen you'll be catching the men who robbed the mail coach at the same time. So good morning to you."

With that Jack left the Deputy, who proceeded at once to send the men under his orders to different parts of the country to make such inquiries as he directed. Jack did not know that he sent one of them up toward Milford, for upon leaving him Jack went to consult with the sheriff. He felt the need of caution too strongly now, to risk telling even the sheriff of his plans. He felt sure of the sheriff's integrity, and of his sincerity in wishing to help to the fullest extent, but if the sheriff knew too much he might talk indiscreetly, and Jack dreaded that. But he secured from the sheriff a very earnest promise of assistance, after another little matter was settled.

"Say!" said the sheriff at the beginning of their conversation. "Let's understand one another to begin with. Then we'll be better pardners. Honest, now, what are you figgerin' on?"

"I don't understand," answered Jack, with a puzzled look on his face.

"Well you see, you made a mighty big hit with that there speech o' yours this mornin', and the peo-

ple are already a talkin' about runnin' you fer the Legislatur next fall. If you break up this here gang o' highwaymen, they'll elect you to anything you want, and say, you might take a fancy to my job."

"Oh, I see," answered Jack with an amused smile. You think that in helping me in this matter, you might be putting a club in my hands with which to break your back. Is that it?"

"That's jest it, pard. An' you can't blame me fer lookin' out for myself a little. You see I've got a family to support."

"Oh no, I don't blame you," answered Jack. "But you take me for a pretty honest fellow, don't you? You'd believe me if I gave you my word of honor, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would, and that's a fact."

"Very well. You may rest easy. I promise you upon my word of honor that I'll never be a candidate for sheriff so long as you want the place. And more than that. If you help me with all your might in this thing, I'll stand your friend for re-election. If anybody runs against you I'll stump the county for you. I never made a speech in my life till to-day, but I'll to my best for you. And more than that, I'll see that you get all the credit I can give you for what we accomplish. I don't want any

of it for myself. Now that's all 'honest,' as you say
Is it a bargain?"

"It's a bargain, pard," answered the sheriff, taking his hand warmly. "And I'll keep it. Whatever you want me to do, jest tell me an' I'll do it or die a tryin'."

Having settled this matter, Jack bade the sheriff be patient. "It may be a week or two before I need your help. There are some other things to be done first."

"Yes, I see—on the quiet like."

"Yes, 'on the quiet,'" answered Jack, who then said good-bye and started homeward.

CHAPTER XIX

A Visitor by Night

IT was nearly dark when the three younger boys reached home, but they waited a good while before getting supper, in the hope that Jack might come. They managed meanwhile to work themselves into a condition of considerable uneasiness about him.

"You see," said Kab, "it's going to be a very dark night and we don't know what might happen. There was that threatening letter you know, and I suppose what he did to-day will make the people who sent it angrier than ever."

"Yes," said Cate, "and if they get it into their heads that he's really going to ferret the gang out and break it up, they'll be afraid even to let him live. They'll try to put him out of the way. Wonder what it is he is going to do?"

"I can't even give a guess," said Kab, "but I can see he's made up his mind to do it, and if those rascals see that as clearly as I do, it would be a good chance for them to put a stop to it all by waylaying

him on his way home to-night. I wish he had Nemo and a gun with him."

"But that gang won't know anything about what he did to-day," interposed Pike, "for a day or two to come."

"How do you know that, Pike?" asked Kab. "How do you know there wasn't one of them at Greensburg, or half a dozen of them for that matter?"

"Why—" the boy hesitated as the truth dawned upon him. Presently he said, "Of course that's so. I didn't think of that, but it's very likely they had some one or more of their number there to watch things. I wish Jack would come!"

After awhile it was decided to have supper, but Pike ate little, and as the others sat before the fire after supper, they missed the boy, and called him. There was no answer, and when search was made it was found that both Nemo and one of the double-barreled shot-guns were missing also.

"That explains it," said Cate. "Pike has gone to meet Jack, taking a gun and Nemo with him to help. He'll go all the way to Greensburg if he don't meet Jack somewhere on the way."

That conjecture was correct enough, as both the others knew. Pike was a boy of singularly resolute purpose and tireless energy in carrying out what-

ever he might undertake in earnest. Furthermore his affection for Jack was extraordinary in its tender intensity, and as he had gone to meet Jack, his brothers knew that weary as he must be with that day's long journey, he would not think of halting or turning back till he should find what had become of his elder brother.

Fortunately Pike had not yet reached Milford when Nemo gave a little whine of delight and rushed forward through the darkness. A moment later Pike heard Jack's voice, saying: "Why, Nemo, old boy, did you come to hunt for me? Is there anybody with you?"

Pike answered in Nemo's stead, and Jack, who was tenderly touched by the boy's devotion, thanked him for it and protested that it was unnecessary.

"You see I must learn to look out for myself, Pike, and I'm likely to be away often now, till this job's done. So you must learn not to worry about me when I'm away."

Pike wanted to ask Jack about his plans, and still more earnestly he wanted to exact a promise from his older brother. Pike had thought this matter out, realizing that Jack must go about a good deal in his effort to ferret out the robber gang, thus placing himself in constant danger of being waylaid and assassinated. He had made up his mind, therefore,

to urge his brother to let him be his companion on all his journeys, armed with a double-barreled shotgun and prepared to take part in any struggle that might occur. He was not only what is called a "dead shot," but he was an unusually quick one as well. Whenever a covey of partridges flew up in front of him, Pike Shelby was apt to bring down two of the birds before anybody else could get a shot at all. He thought, therefore, that if he could be present with his buck-shotted gun, in case of any attempt upon Jack, he might render a very important assistance as without doubt he would have done.

Just now Pike was anxious to propose this to Jack and to exact a promise of him to the desired effect, but he saw that Jack was over weary with the long walk and still more so as a consequence of the day's excitement. So he decided not to speak of the matter till the morrow.

Jack was not much inclined to talk, and so, after a question or two had been asked and answered, the two brothers trudged on in silence. When they reached home they found Captain Lambert there, waiting for Jack.

"I've heard what happened at Greensburg to-day," he said by way of explaining his late visit, "and I've come over to see if I can be of any assistance to you. If I can, I will. But first I want to

congratulate you on a courage that is worthy of your father's son, and on your success in preventing a lynching. That would have been a horrible blot on Decatur county's good name, and you've rendered a very great public service by preventing it. You may be sure the people of the county will remember it."

Jack thanked Captain Lambert for his good opinion and his good will, but added:

"I don't know what assistance I may need, because I don't know yet just what I've got to do, or just how I shall proceed to do it. My first step—"

"Is to keep your mouth shut about your plans," interrupted Captain Lambert. "You don't know how indiscreetly anybody may talk, if you give anybody a chance by telling him what you are thinking of doing. My advice to you is to tell nobody anything except when the time comes for somebody to help you by doing something. Then tell him only so much as is absolutely necessary. The people you're after are a wily and watchful lot, and they'll take pains to learn all they can about your plans and proceedings. So I don't want you to tell even me anything, unless you need my help. One thing I take for granted, and that is that you'll have to do a good deal of riding and there may come a time when your life will depend upon the speed of

your horse. Of course your farm horses aren't fit for such a service, but I have a young beast—five years old—that will answer your purpose as perfectly as if he had been made to order for it. He is strong and full of fiery spirit. He can travel all day or all night without seeming to get tired, and he can outrun any piece of horse-flesh in this county. I want you to use him in this undertaking."

"But he might get shot," Jack interposed, "or maimed in some way, or he might be stolen by the very men I'm after."

"In that case," answered Captain Lambert, "his loss will be my contribution to a cause that every citizen should be glad to serve. I'll send the horse over here in the morning. Now is there anything else I can do for you?"

Jack expressed his grateful appreciation of his neighbor's generous help to the best of his ability, and declared that he could think of nothing else to ask. Then he corrected himself, saying:

"There is one thing you can do for us, Captain Lambert, if you will, and that is to look in upon my brothers now and then when I happen to be away, and give them any advice they may need. You see I don't know much about farming or building or any of the other things that we've got to do here, but my brothers know even less. We were raised on a

farm, of course, but father always kept us at school, so that really we don't know much. It's unfortunate that I must be away a good deal just now, but perhaps——”

“There's no ‘perhaps’ about it,” the captain answered. “I ride about most of the time, and I'll call on the boys every day whenever you are absent. You may be sure I'll not let them make any mistakes for want of advice. But I'd like to have a little talk with you about your plans here before you go away, so that I may direct the work right. I'll ride over here to-morrow morning and we'll talk matters over carefully. You see if I'm to be your overseer, I must have my orders from you as explicitly as possible. It's very late now, and I must be going. Good night, I'll see you to-morrow.”

With that he swung himself into the saddle as lightly as any youth might, for his lifelong habit of living out of doors had effectually saved him from any of that stiffening and loss of activity which is apt to come upon men when they have passed middle life. Indeed, if it is true that “a man is as old as he feels and no older,” Captain Will Lambert was still in the vigor of young manhood in spite of his years.

CHAPTER XX

A Drop Letter

EARLY the next morning Jack began mapping out the work of the party, so that it might go on regularly whether he should himself be at home or not.

"For one thing," he said, "we must get all our open glades plowed for wheat. If we prepare the ground well we ought to get a good crop off them. Fortunately there is plenty of time, and so we'll plow the ground twice thoroughly, and then give it a good harrowing. You'd better go to plowing to-day, Kab, and keep it up till the job's done. I'll plow, too, every day that I can be here, and we'll easily get the ground ready by seeding time."

"Cate, you and Pike had better keep at work clearing land. You know the stretches I've marked out. Cut away all the trees from them. Pick out the best of the timber for building purposes, and cut it into logs of the right lengths. We'll hew them square when we get time. Save the ash and walnut for rails. Cut them into rail lengths, but don't

bother to split them now. We can do that later. Our present task must be to get as much land cleared as we can. Chop all the rest of the trees into logs that we can roll into piles so as to get rid of them by burning. Pike can't do much actual chopping—at least I don't want him to. It's too hard work for him. But he can clear your trees of brush and pile it for burning after it seasons a bit."

"And pray, are you going to send me packing about me business, Jack?" asked O'Reilly. "I observe that you're careful not to assign me any tasks."

"I didn't mean to slight you, Mr. O'Reilly," said Jack, with some embarrassment, "and certainly we don't intend to send you away so long as you're willing to stay. But—"

"But you don't recognize me as one of ye, and so ye don't tell me to go to work at anything. That's the way of it, is it?"

Jack with his newly acquired self-reliance, replied without further hesitation:

"That is hardly a fair way to put it, Mr. O'Reilly. You are our guest. You work as hard as we do, yet we are paying you no wages, and you will not share in those ultimate benefits which we hope for as the result of our work. Naturally I do not feel free to set tasks for you, I want you to do only what you

care to do, knowing all the while that you'll do more than we've any right to ask or to expect."

"Very well then," said O'Reilly. "As I know very little about plowing and a good deal about chopping, I'll join Cate in the woods for the present. He'll need help there, while Kab has plenty of time for the plowing. He'll finish it and be chopping with us long before the time comes for sowing wheat. My own principal business in life is to restrain meself."

"Restrain yourself from what, Mr. O'Reilly?"

"Why from opening me little trunk."

"Why not open it, if you want to?"

"Why because it is full of me books—Virgil, Cicero, Horace and all the rest o' them, and if I'm idle for a bit I shall surely get them out and lie on me back all the day, reading them. You see it's me muscles, not me mind that I need be looking out for just now. I'm about me books, just as a drunkard is about his drink. They tempt me sorely, and if I give way to the temptation it'll master me resolution to me undoing. I'll let meself read a little of Sundays, but for the rest of the time I must be careful and keep busy."

The breadth of O'Reilly's brogue—which was apt to come and go according to his moods—convinced Jack that he was either very much in earnest

in what he said, or disposed to be humorous. So he replied lightly:

"I understand you, Mr. O'Reilly, and it shall be as you please. Work with us boys as much and as hard as you like but remember that if the temptation becomes too strong for you at any time, you are free to go on a little spree of Latin, and we sha'n't mind."

After breakfast was over Jack said to Kab and Cate aside:

"Be a little careful of Pike, boys. He is so full of energy that he'll overwork himself if you don't check him. Whether I am here or not we will let him do the cooking and other light work, so that he shan't toil too long or too hard at heavier things. He must keep us provided with game, too, and that will occupy a good deal of his time. For the rest you must look out and not let him overwork himself when I'm not here to take care of that."

Kab and Cate fully understood this necessity and promised to look out for their younger brother's welfare. They went at once to their work—Kab to his plowing and Cate and O'Reilly to felling trees, leaving Pike to attend to things at the house, while Jack waited for Captain Lambert to come.

There were many smaller things for the boys to do, such as building the temporary stable, making a

table and some chairs, and building bunks to sleep in; but Jack did not think it necessary to give directions as to such matters. He knew the boys would attend to them at odd times, and especially on rainy days.

After his long talk with Captain Lambert, Jack made a little trip to Milford. It was not mail day. Nevertheless Jack's business in Milford was solely with the postmaster, who was also the blacksmith. He wanted to learn where the post-office named "Mixter" might be, and the postmaster told him. It lay at a considerable distance below Greensburg and it served not more than half a dozen rather widely scattered families. But while Jack's sole purpose in visiting Milford on that day, was to get this information, he got in fact something else of perhaps even more consequence.

"They's a letter fer you here," said the blacksmith postmaster, taking the missive from an abandoned horseshoe box and holding it out.

"Why, when did it come?" asked Jack in astonishment. "I thought you had a mail only on Friday."

"And you was mighty right about that," answered the blacksmith. "But this didn't come by mail. It's a drop letter."

A "drop" letter, was one mailed in the post-office from which it was to be delivered. Jack glanced at

this one and his curiosity was at once aroused. For it was directed in the same rude printing letters as those used in the anonymous letter from Mixter.

"Who left this letter here for me?" he asked somewhat eagerly.

"Ef you want to know who's a writin' to you, you'd better open it and see. Leastways I dunno who left it here. It was just slipped through the crack in the door endurin of last night, and that's all I knows about it."

Jack opened the missive. It was anonymous, and was evidently from the same hand that had sent its predecessor. It read:

"Now git out of this, an' git quick. Go back to the river country whare you belong. We ain't got no use for sich as you in these parts. Git quick."

Jack observed that the writer spelled better this time than he had done before. Only here and there was there a misspelt word, and then only with evident intent to misspell. Smiling, Jack said to himself: "The fellow overreaches himself. In his attempt to appear ignorant, he spells the word 'and' without a d, but as he is really not ignorant he actually puts an apostrophe there to indicate the omission."

Then turning to the blacksmith he said:

"I'd make it worth a dollar to you if you could give a good guess as to who put that letter in the post-office."

As he said this he looked closely at the blacksmith but he saw in his countenance no sign of what he was looking for. He was sure the man spoke the truth when he answered:

"Tain't none o' my business to tell folks who their letters comes from, but I'd tell you quick enough if I knowed. I only know that that there letter was slipped through a crack in the door sometime between lockin' up last night and openin' up this mornin'."

"That's all right," answered Jack. "I only thought perhaps you might know something about it."

With that Jack turned away, went home and set himself to plowing for the rest of the day. He had his plans of course, but he did not want to begin acting upon them until he should have thought them completely out. He did not want to make any mistakes, and there was plenty of time. Besides, he wanted to talk the matter over with his brothers before taking even a first step. For he did not reckon them among people to whom it might be dangerous to say anything. He knew he could trust them to be silent under all circumstances, and

he wanted them to know what he was doing or trying to do, so that they might come to his assistance in case of need. He did not refer to the subject until after supper that night, and then he asked his brothers to go with him to the new clearing, under pretense of wishing to look over the work. His real purpose was to have the boys by themselves without O'Reilly's presence. For while he had no distrust of the schoolmaster, Jack thought it desirable to exclude even him from all knowledge of what was planned. "I hardly know how I came to think of it," Jack began, when the boys were seated by him on the trunk of a fallen tree, "but while I was making that speech I saw that some of the people in the crowd were wavering. I wanted to clinch the impression I had made, and I didn't know how to do it. Suddenly it came into my mind that I had that anonymous letter, and that by using it carefully I might find out about the robber band. You see the thing had been running in my head for several days, but I hadn't made anything out of it. But while I was speaking it came to me with a rush. I saw how to set to work, and the feeling came over me that I could do this thing. Without stopping to reflect how small the chance of success was, I blurted out my promise, and the crowd accepted it. I'm going to fulfil that promise if I can. So in the

morning I'm going to Greensburg to get myself sworn in as a deputy sheriff, and then I'm going down to Mixter post-office, to find out who sent that letter."

"But how can you do that, Jack?" asked Pike. "How can a postmaster know who mailed a particular letter on a particular day of last week?"

"Well, you see, Mixter is a very small post-office. The postmaster there doesn't send out many letters, and he's pretty sure to know who sends every one of them. You see he has to look at every one of them, because he has no dating stamp. He has to write on each letter the name of his post-office and the date. So it is pretty certain that he will remember every letter he sent out on his mail day last week, and he will have a special reason for remembering this particular one."

"Why, Jack?"

"Because it was prepaid. He had to take five cents for postage on it, and then write 'Paid five cents' on the back of it. Then he had to enter the money in his postage book, and mark it on the slip that he sends out with every package of letters."

"But suppose he's 'in' with the gang Jack, and knows why you want to find out."

"I've thought of that and it may give me trouble. But if it does there are several ways of making him

tell, even if I have to go to Indianapolis and get a post-office inspector to take the matter up. Or I can threaten the postmaster with arrest—for I mean to have some blank warrants with me—and promise to let him alone if he tells. But I shan't begin by asking him any direct questions. I'll try to draw out the information in other ways first. Anyhow I mean to get it, and as I shall start by sunrise, we'd better be going to bed now. Tell nobody anything, and look out for yourselves while I'm gone. I got another threatening letter to-day." And he told them all about that.

"Have Nemo and the new dogs made friends yet?"

"Oh yes," answered Pike. "I had them out hunting together for an hour or two to-day, and they all understand that they're members of the Shelby family. You'll take a gun with you, Jack?"

"No, Pike. I thought at first I would take one of the shotguns, but it won't do. You see while nobody would think anything of my going about here with a shotgun, it would be different if I carried one at a long distance from home. That would set everybody to wondering, and watching me. So I'll go unarmed."

Then it was that Pike had his opportunity. He put in his earnest plea for the privilege of going with

Jack, but the older brother overruled his wish, saying:

"That wouldn't do at all, Pike. If two of us went together it would excite suspicion. Don't be uneasy. I can take care of myself."

CHAPTER XXI

The Irruption of the Pigeons

THE boys had their breakfast in the cabin about daylight. Pike had fed and curried the horses while it was still entirely dark, and, as the morning was sharply chill, the door was not again opened till after the meal was eaten, which was a trifle past sunrise. When at last Pike did open it, he was well-nigh staggered by what he saw, and he excitedly called to the others to come and look.

It was well worth while, for in the beech woods in front of the door, the whole atmosphere was thick with fluttering, wrangling, noisy quarrelling pigeons. It was a sight such as none of the boys had ever seen before, and such as will never again be seen in this country while time lasts. But in that part of Indiana at that time, a sight like that was seen once every year when the beechnuts were ripening in the autumn.

It is not easy to describe it, so as to give any adequate idea of the multitude of the birds or of their ceaseless, chattering activity. There were thou-

sands, millions, myriads of them, or at least it seemed so. Every limb of every tree was crowded with the struggling, fighting creatures, till it was bent, sometimes to the very ground with their weight. The ground itself was covered with them as they hopped and flew about in eager rivalry to fill their crows with the half-ripened beechnuts and all the space between the ground below and the tree branches above was a shimmering screen of fluttering birds. Meanwhile the sky above was almost blotted out of sight, and now and then the sun itself was darkened by great flocks of the pigeons flying high above the trees.

The birds in and beneath the trees and on the ground were mainly the younger ones—birds that had just learned to fly and that were disposed to seek frequent rest. They were feeding full upon the beech mast, while the older birds, more confident in their powers of flight, were passing on in clouds high above them in search of fresh forests to plunder.

"Get your guns quick, boys," cried the schoolmaster, "and shoot while ye've the chance. They'll all be gone in an hour or two, and if ye're quick, about it, you can lay in a whole winter's supply of mighty toothsome meat before they go."

The boys set to work at once, Jack joining them,

for he could not resist the temptation to linger and share in the sport, although it had been his purpose to set off at once for Greensburg.

"But what's the use of killing so many of them?" he asked after half an hour's work among the trees. "We've more now than we can eat before they go bad."

Jack had the true sportsman's instinct, which forbids the wanton killing of more game than can be used for food.

"Oh we can kape all that you can kill," answered the schoolmaster excitedly. "They're moighty foine whin they're droied. Go on with yer guns, an' it's Dinnis O'Reilly that'll take care o' the game."

The birds presently began to disappear, as the schoolmaster had foretold. They were not frightened away by the ceaseless popping of the guns, for indeed, in the excitement of their hungry quest for food, they seemed to pay no attention either to the weapons of slaughter or to the boys who were firing them. Even the dogs seemed to have no terrors for them, though all three dogs took part in the hunt by rushing about, and seizing and instantly killing every pigeon that unwarily came within reach of their jaws.

The schoolmaster explained the matter a little later, after the multitudes had left, and while the

boys were shooting only now and then into flocks of the pigeons that were flying high above them.

"Ye see," he said, "the birds are migrating. They've been up north, where they bring up their broods in the summer toime, and now they're going south for the winter. They stopped with us simply to get their breakfast. They slept last night at a pigeon roost a few moiles to the north of us, and as they stripped the trees there last night, they had nothing to eat before resuming their journey this morning. So as they flew along they descended upon our beech trees for breakfast. They've got their crows full now and they're going on to the roost that they'll sleep at to-night. It's the younger ones mostly that we've had with us for breakfast. It's the youngsters that's hungriest always whether you're thinking of birds or boys or pigs. Besoides the young birds can't fly so well as their elders; they must stop to rest every now and then, so they just move along feeding as they go, and trying to kape up with their parents and schoolmasters as best they can. Ye'll foind when we come to pick the birds we've killed that noine in every tin of them is a mere baby, and that's lucky for us, for whoile there's not a tiderer morsel in all the world than a young pigeon, the man or boy that ates an old one needs all his teeth for the purpose."

But while the main flight of pigeons was over early in the day, there were many thousands of laggards that continued to come in flocks which would have seemed multitudes to the boys if they had not seen the myriads of the early morning. O'Reilly did none of the shooting, but he busied himself gathering the birds as they were killed. Wherever the boys had gone he had a considerable pile of them, and when these were all brought together at the cabin during the day, they made a little mountain.

Jack left on his journey after the first hour's shooting, and a little after noon the boys, tired and satisfied, put away their guns, and set to work to pick and clean their game. As they did so Pike plied the schoolmaster with questions which O'Reilly declared were "as numerous as the pigeons themselves." He wanted to know all about the birds—where they came from, whither they were going, and the why and wherefore of it all. The schoolmaster did his best to answer.

"They're a wild bird native to America," he said. Then he qualified that statement:

"There are pigeons all over the world, but they vary a good deal in different countries. This kind is purely American. They go up into Canada every spring to make their nests and bring up their young—"

"Then we'll have them with us again in the spring?" asked Pike in eager expectation.

"Indade no, ye young cormorant. Ye'll see flocks of them in the spring, every day for a week or two, but there'll be no such descent as this upon us, and the flocks will fly so high that ye'll have to do your very fanciest shooting to get many of the birds."

"But why, Mr. O'Reilly? All these birds will have to go back in the spring to raise their next summer's broods, won't they?"

"All of them that survive the winter, yes. That'll be maybe a tenth of them or less. Ye see it's the case with nearly all wild creatures that more than half of them, and sometimes nine-tenths of them die during the winter."

"But you say the pigeons go south in the winter. I should think they would go far enough while they are at it to escape all the coldest weather."

The boys under the schoolmaster's direction, were busily picking and cleaning the birds and piling them in layers with a little salt sprinkled over each layer. They were to be left thus for a day or two to absorb salt. After that they were to be hung up in the sun to dry for winter use.

The schoolmaster paused to give some directions about the work before answering Pike's question. After a little he said:

"It isn't the cold that kills them, Pike. They are much too warmly clad for that. Indade if the cold were all they'd be safe enough to stay all winter where they were hatched. But there isn't food enough there for such multitudes of them, and even such food as there is is not easy to get at when buried under deep snow as it is every winter. It's hunger that prompts them to migrate. You never thought of it, I suppose, but all wild creatures are hungry more than half the time, and always must be so. I'll explain that to ye, Pike, after I've finished what I'm saying. When the pigeons start south they find plenty of beechnuts and other food on the way, but during the winter the supplies are nowhere so abundant, and after a little while they run short. The pigeons don't all go to one part of the south. If they did they'd soon exhaust their food supplies and all starve to death at once. They scatter in every direction in search of food. It's doubtful if they have any social instincts at all. Pigeons fly in flocks, just as fish go in schools, not because they're fond of each other's company, but because each of them is trying to get all the food he can find, and wherever food is found in abundance, there all of them gather at once. Now in the fall the beech woods are full of food for them, so they throng the beech woods. But when they are on their way

back in the spring they encounter no such food supplies. So instead of swarming down upon these woods they scatter widely each flock and each bird hunting for such food as it can find."

"It seems a pity that so many of them must starve to death every winter," said Pike.

"It's a beneficent provision of nature," answered the schoolmaster. I promised to explain that and I will. It is common to all wild creatures or nearly all. If it were not so the whole world would be full of them and there wouldn't be food enough for any of them. Take these pigeons for example. Every pair of them raises from fifteen to forty or fifty young every summer. Now even if each pair raised only ten young ones a year, there would be ten times as many each year as there were the year before. Now imagine the birds ye've had a glimpse of to-day multiplied by ten! and then imagine them multiplied by ten again the next year and the next and the next. The whole world wouldn't hold them. Just figure it up a little, Pike. Suppose there were only a hundred pairs of the birds to start with. There'd be a thousand the next year, ten thousand the next,—ten millions at the end of five years, a thousand billions at the end of ten years, and so on."

"I see," said Pike. "Your calculation is wrong of course, but it illustrates the matter clearly."

"Wrong?" almost shouted the schoolmaster.
"Wrong? Me calculation wrong? Ye mane to tell
me I can't multiply by ten without a mistake?"

"It isn't that," said Pike. "You started with a hundred pairs, and each *pair* was to raise ten young birds. That would be five pairs each or a thousand birds at the end of the first year, and at the end of the second year the total number of birds would be five thousand instead of ten thousand, and so on."

"You're roight, Poike, and I'm glad I fell into the error."

"Why, Mr. O'Reilly?"

"Why because it has shown me that your apprehension is wide awake, that you think for yourself, and that manes more for a boy than any amount of mere learning. Still, as you say, the calculation illustrates the truth I was trying to enforce."

"I wish I could go to school to you, Mr. O'Reilly," said Pike with admiration in his voice.

"And why do you wish that, Poike?"

"Because you know how to teach. You explain things, and you let a fellow think a little instead of just having to remember what you've told him or what he has read in a book."

"That's the very highest compliment you could pay me, Pike, as a schoolmaster. But would you really like to go to school to me?"

"Indeed I would," answered the boy with emphasis.

"So would I," said Kab.

"And I," added Cate.

"Very well then, ye shall—all three of you. I've had that in mind ever since I've known you. It's well past the equinox now, and the evenings are growing longer and longer. You can work at your building and farming and the like, only during the days, leaving the long evenings free. If you've a moind for it, we'll do a little getting ready, and then—a week or so hence—we'll set up a little evening school. With so few pupils to teach, I can make as much out of an hour or so each evening, as you'd ordinarily get out of all day schooling."

The boys were delighted with this prospect, and they expressed their gratitude to Mr. O'Reilly in tones that meant even more than the words spoken, though these were sincere and hearty. Kab undertook to make the chairs and study table, and to have them ready on time. Then arose the question of lights by which to study.

"I suppose we can afford to buy some candles," said Kab, "now that we don't have to pay out money for corn and fodder. Still——"

"It's cheaper to make our own," interrupted the schoolmaster, "and that's what we'll do."

"But we haven't any tallow," said Cate.

"No," said Kab, "and we're not likely to be killing a beef now and then, as we haven't even a cow."

"All of your statements are entoirely true, young gentlemen," said the schoolmaster, "but they are all completely beside the mark. Tallow is not by any means the only fat that will burn. All oils are combustible, and all of them furnish light when they burn. We haven't any tallow and we're not likely to have any, but we can kill 'coons and 'possums and other fat animals and save their fat. Such fat wouldn't make very good candles of the ordinary sort—it's too oily and therefore would melt away too fast. But we can use it in another way. When we've got the fat, we'll heat it to the boiling point and boil it for awhile. That's to expel all the water that's in it, otherwise it would sputter in burning. When we've boiled the water out, we'll pour the hot fat into saucers and the like. We'll put some coils of candle wick into it, letting their ends stick up, and when the fat hardens we'll have a kind of candle. We'll put three or four wicks into each saucer full of fat, and so have three or four flames to our candle. I think that will work. If it don't, there's another way. We can pass the wicks through little disks of cork, so that they'll float in melted fat. Then when

we want a light we will simply melt the fat in a saucer and set it on top of a cup of hot water to keep it melted. Then we'll have a lamp instead of a candle. We'll try both plans and adopt the one that works best."

"But we haven't any saucers," said Pike.

"We can buy a dozen cheap ones in Greensburg for a few cents," said Cate.

"Even that won't be necessary," said Kab. "I'll furnish something a good deal better than saucers, and I'll have them ready by the time you get enough 'coon and 'possum fat, Pike, to begin with."

"What's your plan, if I may ask," queried O'Reilly.

"Why I've found a place down in the cliff, where I can dig out the stone in its soft state, just as you say the Indians used to do. I'll whittle out all the lamps we need, and make them of a better shape than saucers are."

"That's excellent, Kab," said the schoolmaster. "But now you and Cate had better get to your plowing and chopping. Pike and I will be able to dress the rest of the pigeons."

When the rest had gone, Pike brought the conversation back to the subject of the pigeons.

"May I ask another question about the pigeons?" he said, somewhat timidly.

"Ask all the questions you loike, me boy, but I'll not give bail for me ability to answer them all. I'll do me best, and that's all that any one can do."

"Well, what I want to know is why I never saw such a flight of pigeons as this when I was living down on the river. We used to see great flocks of pigeons, of course, flying over us, but nothing like this. I wonder why."

"There are several reasons for that, Poike. You didn't live in the midst of a vast beech forest like this, when you lived down in the river country."

"No, of course not. But all the hills were covered with beech woods."

"If you'll think a bit, Poike, ye'll see that that is not quoite true. The steep hillsides down there are covered with woods—mostly beech—and so are some of the hilltops. But all the river bottoms on both sides of the river are cleared, and after you reach the hilltops, you find farms everywhere within five or ten miles of the river. Only here and there a strip of woodland remains uncleared. In such a region the birds do not find that abundance of food that they foind here. So they fly over that comparatively barren country—barren for their purposes I mean—and go as quickly as they can from the pigeon roosts north of it to the pigeon roosts south of it. As I told ye before, all their movements are

determined by questions of food supply. And when all this country is settled, with cleared fields where there are woodlands now, there'll be no more such flights of pigeons anywhere, as that which ye have seen to-day."

"Where will they go then?"

"They won't go at all, Poike, at least in anything like such numbers. They'll be starved down to comparatively small flocks. Their numbers will diminish exactly as their sources of food grow less."

"It seems a pity," said Pike.

"It is a pity," answered the schoolmaster, "in more ways than one. But the loss of the pigeons is the smallest part of it. After all they are a good deal of a pest. They've eaten enough of our beechnuts this very morning to fatten fifty hogs. Fortunately they've come early, while the greater part of the beechnuts are still unripened on the trees, and if Jack thinks best to buy some hogs this fall he'll have no trouble in fattening them."

"But you say the loss of the pigeons isn't the worst of it. What is, please?"

"Why the destruction of the trees."

"But they're in the way," answered Pike, "and they must be destroyed if ever this is to become a farming country."

"That's true enough, me boy, and that's just it.

In order to make fields we must cut down the forests. As there is no present market for the trees, we must simply roll them into piles and burn them. Now the time will come, after timber grows scarce, when the logs that you boys will burn this year and next, or a like number of similar logs, will sell for enough money to make all of you rich. Everybody else must do the same in opening fields and making farms, and the waste will be enormous. The worst of it is that things will grow worse instead of better, after the demand for timber puts a high price on it. By that time there will be only a small part of the forests left, but every log will have a money value at the sawmills, and so every man who owns forest lands will cut down his trees and sell them."

The picking and cleaning of the birds that had been killed, was now nearly finished, and Pike knew that as soon as the last of them should be salted down, the schoolmaster and he must set out to help Cate with the wood-chopping. He hurried therefore to ask still another question while there was yet time for O'Reilly to answer it.

"You have mentioned pigeon roosts several times," he said, "as if the birds had certain fixed places for spending the nights. Do they do that?"

"Yes, indeed, and they roost in precisely the same

places every year. That's a sight worth seeing. The pigeons spread out over a strip of country twenty miles or more in width during the day, and they're as thick all over that strip as they were here this morning. You may imagine what happens at night then, when I tell you that the whole great army of them is concentrated every night in a single pigeon roost that embraces only a square mile or less of woodlands. They occupy every limb and every twig of every tree, and their weight is so great that many large limbs are actually broken off by it. It's a pandemonium a pigeon roost is, and men go there with torches and sticks, and bring away whole wagon loads of the birds in the morning. They have only to sweep them down from the lower limbs with sticks, letting them fall into bags held open for the purpose. But we're at the end of our job, Poike, so we must go out and help Cate."

CHAPTER XXII

The Miller-Postmaster

AFTER stopping at Greensburg to have himself sworn in as a deputy sheriff, Jack went off southward in search of the post-office called Mixter. Early in the afternoon he found it. It was in a very small horse-mill, and the miller was postmaster.

A horsemill was a mill to which power was supplied by horses. Outside the mill proper, but under a shed, there was a large wooden wheel or disk—a sort of round platform—set slantwise; that is to say, with one edge higher than the other. Horses were led upon this wooden disk, and hitched to beams above. Then certain pins which had held the wheel still were removed, so that the wheel might be turned by the weight of the horses. As the horses were hitched to a stationary beam, they were obliged to walk as soon as the wheel began to slip from under their feet. They did not go anywhere with all their steady, uphill walking, but they kept the wheel turning, and that kept the machinery of the mill going.

The Mixter mill was a lonely one, standing by the road in the midst of the woods, with its owner's comfortable double log house standing conveniently near. Jack had felt the necessity of foresight, and as he had no bag of grain to be ground, he had written a letter to Kab, addressed it to Clifty and brought it with him meaning to post it at Mixter, as an excuse for going thither at all.

The miller seemed a jolly old fellow. He was fond of seeing people and talking with them, and naturally his opportunities in that way were few and small. So when Jack rode up, the miller gave him a cordial welcome, and Jack entered at once into conversation with him, leading him carefully to talk about the surrounding country and the people who were beginning to settle it. Jack learned that the Mixter miller, whose own name was Mixter, had very few neighbors, the nearest of them being one Forbes, who kept a little roadside tavern about half a mile farther down the road.

"Forbes ain't no account," the miller said. "I don't know as he's edzactly lazy, but he don't do no reg'lar work. He makes a big fuss about gittin' a crop planted, but the crop don't amount to nothin' and after it's in Forbes gits too tired like to do anything fer it. Still he ain't edzactly lazy, as I said, for he's always a ridin' round the country, horse

tradin' he says, an' sometimes he gits some money out'n fellers what stops at his tavern. You'll be goin' there, may be?"

"I don't know" said Jack. "I suppose I might go on farther to-night, but—well, I'll see. Oh you're the postmaster, I believe. I've got a letter here that I'd like to mail. I'll prepay the postage." With that Jack produced his letter to Kab, and the postmaster scrutinized it carefully. After a little he said:

"Wonder what sort o' folks them Shelby people is anyhow. People seems to 'low they won't take their letters out 'n the post-office unless they're pre-paid."

"How do you mean?" asked Jack. For this was precisely what he wanted the miller-postmaster to talk about.

"Well, you see it's this way. You say you want to prepay this letter an' it's backed to one o' them Shelby fellers. Well only about a week or ten days ago somebody else put a letter in here for one o' them Shelby fellers, an' he prepaid it too."

"Who was it?" asked Jack. Then fearing that his question had been too abrupt he added—"I didn't know the Shelby boys had any friends down this way."

"I don't know as they has," said Mixter. "Only

as I said, Jim Forbes he brought a letter here a little while ago, an' prepaid it. Now Jim Forbes ain't much on payin' nothin' ef he kin git out o' payin'. So that sort o' set me to wonderin'. His letter was backed to one o' them Shelby fellers, an' 'twas backed wrong. Leastways it said 'Milford' on it, an' that's not the proper name o' the post-office. I tol' him it ought to be Clifty an', seein's how Jim Forbes can't write, he axed me to change it, an' I done it fer him. So when you gives me a letter backed fer a Shelby feller, an' says you wants to prepay it why I jest naturally fell to wonderin' why."

"But if Forbes can't write, how is it that he's sending letters?" asked Jack, trying to seem as indifferent as possible to the answer he might receive.

"I dunno," answered Mixter; "I 'low mebbe somebody give him the letter when he was a ridin' round like, an' axed him to mail it. Anyways that letter wasn't backed in writin'. It was just sort o' printin' on it, like's if the person what sent it didn't know how to make writin' letters."

"Do you suppose I could get a clean bed at Forbes's if I should decide to stay all night?"

"Yes, I reckon so. But—" The miller hesitated, and Jack was eager for him to go on.

"You think he mightn't feed me very well?"

"Oh, as to that feedin's feedin' in this neck o' the

woods. You'll git fried chicken maybe an' hot biscuit an' I don't know what else. It'll be good enough an' they'll be enough of it. But—" Again the miller paused.

"What is it?" asked Jack.

"Oh, I ain't no gossip. I 'low it's enough fer a man to mind his own business in this here world. But I've sort o' took a fancy to you. You're a pretty nice sort o' young feller, an'—well I'll tell you; Jim Forbes has got a good many customers or friends what stays over night at his place some often, an' I reckon you mightn't like some of em. They're mostly from over Napoleon way."

Napoleon was a town in a neighboring county. It was the point from which all roads in that region radiated, and pretty nearly all the worst men of the frontier lived there or near there, or went thither frequently. Jack knew the reputation of the place, and he fully understood what the miller meant.

"Are there any of them at Forbes's now?" he asked.

"No, they ain't nobody there now 'ceptin' ole Mis' Forbes an' Jim's darter, Glorviny. Jim's away somewhere—horse tradin' mebbe,—but he mout turn up with a lot o' them fellers to-night. He's liable to. So, I was just a thinkin' that mebbe you'd

better stay the night with me an' my little gal. You can't pay me nothin' fer the 'commodation, 'cause I ain't got no tavern license, an' you're welcome, anyhow, but may be you wouldn't mind never a sayin' o' nothin' about the thing so's Jim Forbes would hear about it. He'd think I was a cuttin' inter his trade o' feedin' an' sleepin' folks fer money."

Jack reflected rapidly and came to a prompt decision to pass the night with the miller. His only reason for having planned to go to Forbes's for the night was that he wanted to meet the person who had sent him the threatening letter, and learn what he could concerning him. As Forbes was not at home that reason disappeared. And for another thing Jack shrewdly suspected that he might learn more of what he wanted from the garrulous old miller than he would have been likely to learn from Forbes himself even if that shady personage had been at home. There were some other considerations that helped him to a decision. He was satisfied that the miller was an honest man, and, notwithstanding the old man's prudence in speech, Jack had discovered that he profoundly distrusted Forbes, and that for some reason he did not want him—Jack—to pass the night at the tavern.

All these things and some others flashed through Jack's mind in a moment, and so, without any ap-

pearance of hesitation he thanked Mixter for his hospitality and accepted it, at the same time giving the miller his name, and oddly enough it did not seem to surprise Mixter to learn that his visitor was "one o' them Shelby fellers."

CHAPTER XXIII

Parthenia Talks

JACK went to the miller's house accompanied by its owner, taking his saddle bags with him. He stabled and fed his horse, currying the animal with his own hands and carefully washing his fetlocks, for Jack Shelby was a kindly horse-master. Then after giving himself a good scrub in the rain barrel that stood at the corner of the stable, he went into the house and made acquaintance with his hostess, the miller's daughter, whose name, he learned was Parthenia, or, as the miller pronounced it "Partheny."

"Pop got my name out of a book," she explained to Jack in the course of a conversation in which she talked so incessantly that he had need to utter scarcely so much as a word.

"You see us folks has always been story readin' people, an' mammy, when she was a livin' used to read all the stories she could git a holt on, jes' as I do now. Are ye fond o' readin' stories Jack?"

She didn't hesitate to make use of the young man's first name without apology. It was the uni-

versal custom of the country so to address people, with very little regard to age, social position or anything else. And even if no such easy social custom had prevailed, the usage would have been right enough in this case, as Jack Shelby was a boy of nineteen or twenty years, while the miller's daughter was a widow of forty at the least. She was nearly six feet in height, lean, muscular, and possessed of sharply angular elbows and big bony hands that made Jack wonder how she had become possessed of her romantic name, Parthenia.

In spite of her height, her angularity and her obvious maturity, the miller always called her his "little gal," in tender memory, no doubt, of that long gone time when she had been a child playing about his knees.

"Yes," said the miller, reminiscently, "my little gal's mother was mighty fond o' readin', 'specially of stories, an' she liked story-book names. So when our little gal come to us, she 'lowed as how the little beauty should have a good, high soundin' story-book name. Fust off she called her Ingomar, but a schoolmaster tolle her Ingomar was a man's name an' as how she'd orter call the little gal Partheny instead. An' when Jim Forbes's little gal come my little gal's mother was dead an' gone but my little gal had got all her fancy fer good, story-

book names, an' so she named Jim's wife's baby Glorviny. That ain't jest right mebbe. How is it, little gal? What's the right sound o' the name ye give Jim Forbes's wife's baby—her that cooks an' keeps tavern fer Jim now?"

"Glorvinia," answered the miller's daughter. "I got it out o' the loveliest story y'ever read. But I'm sorry now I give it to her."

At that moment the miller was called to the mill to grind a grist, so that Jack Shelby was left alone with Parthenia.

"Why are you sorry you gave her the name Mrs—" Jack didn't know her married name, and so he hesitated.

"Oh, call me Parthenia. That's my name an' it's a good enough name for anybody to be called by," she answered.

"It is a beautiful name," said Jack, sincerely enough, and thereby winning a world of good opinion and good will at the hands of his hostess. "It's a beautiful name, I think, when it is pronounced in full—Parthenia—instead of being shortened to Partheny."

"That's what I tell everybody, an' sometimes I won't answer when folks calls me Partheny—short like."

"I don't blame you," said Jack, seeing that he

had won favor in his hostess's eyes. "But tell me, please, why you are sorry that you named Forbes's daughter Glorvinia?"

The woman hesitated a moment. She was principled against gossiping, but, like many of the rest of us, she never allowed her principles seriously to interfere with her inclinations. She was apt to make her bow to her principles, by hesitating to gossip, and then to indulge her inclinations by gossiping as much as she liked.

"Well, I never talk scandal," she said in answer to the question, "but between you an' me I'm afeard the name's wasted on Glorviny. She's a good sort o' gal, but her pop's a bad lot, an' she's a keepin' o' the tavern you know, an' has to see a good many men that ain't nice. Not that that hurts Glorviny any, for I will say she knows how to keep herself to herself, but Jim Forbes is a bad lot, and she keeps on a believin' in *him*."

"Don't you think it is rather to her credit," Jack asked, "to be loyal to her father in that way?"

"I dunno but it is," answered the woman, "but she's a little too much so. She's so keerful about her pop that she won't tell even me anything about the goin's on over at the tavern. Of course it's right fer her not to go round a gossipin' to the neighbors—only there ain't no neighbors hereabouts—but"

why should she make secrets o' things in talkin' to me who was there when she was born an' who choosed her name fer her? But that ain't the worst of it. I'm 'lowin' she's done fell in love with that Bill Grimly from down there at Napoleon."

The name Grimly caused Jack Shelby to prick up his ears, as it were.

"Do you mean Grimly the chief deputy marshal of this district?" he asked.

"Yes, the same," answered the woman, with more of haughtiness than the occasion seemed to call for. "He's deputy marshal an' he never fergits the fac' nor lets other folks fergit it. He's that high an' mighty there's no livin' in the same neighborhood with him, unless you're willin' to eat dirt before him."

Parthenia omitted to mention the fact that Bill Grimly had at one time aspired to become the successor of her own late lamented husband; that her father had sternly ordered him off the premises; that Grimly had thereupon proposed an elopement of the most romantic sort, to which she was more than eager to let herself be "over-persuaded;" and that he had suddenly dropped the whole matter, beginning at once to pay diligent court to the far prettier and much younger Glorvinia Forbes.

But without any disclosure of this perfidy on the

part of Bill Grimly, Jack Shelby had reasons of his own for disapproving that arrogantly self-assuming person. He asked Parthenia what she knew about Grimly.

"Well, Pop don't like him. I ain't no gossip, Jack, an' so I mustn't say nothin' about his goin's on. But folks does say it's sort o' curious the way he's always a ridin' round like, and the way he's always got more money 'n anybody else, an' the way he's in with a lot o' pretty lowdown folks what's in the habit o' havin' new horses pretty often an' sellin' 'em quick like—sellin' 'em way out 'n the country."

The woman paused. She had already said more than she had at first intended to say, and more than was prudent, but it had been a long time since she had had a chance for what she called "a good talk," and Jack Shelby was a listener to her liking. He seemed interested, and he did not interrupt. He was so profoundly respectful, or as she called it, "perlite like," that he did not speak at all except when she paused, and then, instead of trying to "turn the conversation," he simply said or asked something to induce her to continue. So when she paused, and Jack asked:

"How do you mean—'selling them out of the country?'" she was moved to say a good deal more,

which was precisely what Jack Shelby wanted her to do.

"Well," she said, "you know when a feller has got a horse that's his'n and everybody knows it's his'n, he's not over partic'ler who he sells it to if he gits his price. But they's some folks what sometimes has horses that—well that fer their own reasons they'd ruther ride away to a distance like, afore offer'n' 'em fer sale."

"Yes," said Jack, "I've heard that there are horse thieves in this part of the country. But surely your neighbor, Mr. Forbes——"

"Oh, I ain't a sayin' nothin'," interrupted the woman quickly. "Only folks will talk you know, an' sometimes they says, partic'lar at meetin's, fer Jim Forbes always goes to meetin',—sometimes they says how curious it is about Jim's bad luck in havin' his stables robbed so frequent like an' how curious it is that 'tain't Jim's own horses that gits theirselves stole, but horses belongin' to strangers like when they stop over night at Jim's tavern."

"I see," said Jack meditatively.

"Oh, I ain't a sayin' nothin'" hurriedly protested the woman." I *never* say nothin' 'bout my neighbors. I'm only a tellin' you what other folks says. You see that's different. What I was a goin' to say is that Bill Grimly sometimes sends a horse and

sometimes two or three up here to Jim Forbes to trade or sell for him, an' nobody ever steals them out 'n Jim's stables. They do say Jim always turns 'em out to pasture like so long as he keeps 'em. So mebbe that accounts fer their never gettin' stole."

The return of the miller at this point in the conversation served to interrupt it, and Parthenia went to the kitchen to prepare the supper.

CHAPTER XXIV

A Bundle of Papers

WHILE Parthenia made biscuit, fried chicken and did whatever else there was to be done in the preparation of a supper that she wanted to make as pleasing as she could to her guest, Jack talked with Mixter the miller. Jack wanted to find out all he could about the old man, and he carefully directed the conversation with that end constantly in view.

By the time that supper was ready Jack's mind was fully made up. He was satisfied that the miller was an honest man whom he could trust, if he should have need. He was a Kentuckian who had settled in this part of Indiana a good many years before the time of this story. He was comfortably well to do, having a good little farm and nobody to care for except himself and his widowed daughter. He had set up his mill, and got himself appointed as postmaster, not so much for the sake of the very small profit there was in either of those occupations, as for the sake of company. The region was very sparsely settled and but for the mill and the post-office he would have had

scarcely anybody to speak to from one month's end to another's. People must come to mill now and then, and people must come to the post-office. There were very few letters received or delivered there, but it was the custom of pretty nearly every farmer in that region to subscribe for at least one weekly newspaper.

"Them newspapers, yer see," Mixter said to Jack, "them newspapers is smart. The men only half keers fer the news, an' more'n half on 'em wouldn't take no papers at all ef 'twan't fer their stories, sich as women folks likes. So they always has stories a runnin', some of 'em fer weeks at a time; an' before one story's finished another begins, an' generally the new story gits to its most excitin' chapter, where things is left hangin' in the air like, jest as the old story comes to an end. Well you see the women folks always reads the stories, an' so the men-folks has jest got to come to the post-office fer the papers the very day they's due, no matter what the weather is. If they didn't they'd git the'r hair combed the wrong way at home."

The old man chuckled with delight at thought of the success of his scheme for securing company by keeping a little country post-office.

"It's curious," he said meditatively as if contemplating some abstruse problem in the laws of human

nature, "it's curious how women does like to read them stories. My little gal's old enough to know better, but she's jest like all the rest of 'em—crazy fer stories. I take the 'Cincinnati Dollar Times' fer her, jest fer the stories. An I must say they're awfully interestin.' Sometimes I can't hardly wait fer the next number myself till it comes. Then there's Glorviny Forbes. She takes a paper called 'The Flag of our Union,' an' she an' my little gal they changes like, so's both on 'em kin read the stories in both papers. Now somethin' else has happened so's my little gal's jest swamped with stories. 'Bout a week 'er so ago Glorviny she sent over three big bundles o' papers to my little gal, an' tolle her she might keep 'em. They was done up in wrappers, an Glorviny says as how her pop got 'em somewherees an' brung 'em to her, an' as how they was other bundles what had jest the same papers in 'em, so my little gal might keep these. Here's one of the bundles now; my little gal ain't got round to it yet I s'pose."

With that he handed the parcel to Jack, looking shrewdly at his face as the young man turned it over and examined it. Jack looked first at the wrapper, which had the word "Indianapolis" scrawled upon it and nothing more. As this wrapper covered only the middle of the package, leaving both ends open,

Jack peered in at the ends. He saw that the large bundle consisted of several small ones, each containing several copies of the Saturday Evening Post, a weekly paper published in Philadelphia. He managed to draw several of these smaller packages partly out, without breaking the wrapper, and saw that each was addressed to a different town, one to Columbus, another to Terre Haute and so forth. Then examining the corners of the individual papers, he found written upon them the personal names of the several subscribers for whom they were intended.

During all this time the old miller was looking at him closely as if trying to read the expression of his countenance. As Jack looked up he caught sight of the miller's eyes, and he trusted them as honest eyes.

" May I take this package with me? " he asked.

" Will you make good use of it—and do what you promised at Greensburg last Monday? " asked the miller eagerly.

" Then you were at Greensburg? "

" Yes, I was there an' I knowed what you come here fer when I fust seed you, only I didn't let on. Then when you axed me about that letter what was backed in printin' 'stead o' writin', I says to myself I'll keep him over night an' find out what he thinks o' them bundles o' papers. I was 'spicious like, about 'em. But as no sich bundles ever comes to

my little post-office, I couldn't be clear in my mind. So you think them's it?"

"Yes," answered Jack. "This is a mail package which was on its way to Indianapolis. The postmaster there would have opened it and sent each of the smaller packages to the town to which it is directed. Then the postmaster in each of those towns would have opened his package and distributed the papers to the persons whose names are written on the corners. You're sure this bundle came from Jim Forbes's house?"

"Yes, I'll swear to that when you want swearin' done,—as you will purty soon I s'pose."

"Then I may take the package with me?"

"Yes—if you won't say nothin' to my little gal about it."

"I won't. But I must leave here after supper. I must go to Greensburg to-night. Can you explain that to your daughter?"

"Yes, I'll settle that. Put the papers in yer saddle bags quick, afore she comes to tell us supper's ready."

At supper the miller announced Jack's intended departure to his daughter, who hospitably entreated him to remain until morning. When he convinced her that he must ride away that evening, she insisted

upon putting up a luncheon for him to eat upon his journey, saying:

“Night ridin’s a mighty hungry sort o’ business, you know.”

As he mounted his horse after supper the old miller said to him almost under his breath:

“You’ll be keerful not to mention me nor my little gal till after you’ve nabbed your man, won’t you, Jack?”

Jack reassured him, and rode away in the darkness of a heavily overcast night.

CHAPTER XXV

A Night Out with Nemo

IT was Pike's good habit, whenever he had anything to do, to set to work at it as soon as possible. "What's the use of waiting for some other time?" he would ask when waiting was suggested. And as it is usually not easy to answer that question satisfactorily when any one asks it in earnest, Pike usually managed to have his way in the matter of beginning things promptly.

As soon, therefore, as Pike understood the necessity of killing as many 'coons and 'possums as possible by way of providing light for school use, he planned to begin the work at once. The first night after Jack left there were a good many things to be done. The sleeping bunks were not yet finished, and Kab, who had begun to make chairs evenings after the day's work out of doors was done, needed some assistance in that undertaking. There were still other things to be done. Cate had found and bought a cow that day, or rather the cow had found him. A farmer from somewhere beyond the creek

had in some way learned that the boys wanted a cow. He was not a thrifty person. He had done a good deal more resting than working during the summer, while the weeds in his corn had kept steadily busy at their work. As a consequence the farmer found, as Fall came on, that he was not likely to have corn enough, after providing bread for his family, to feed his one horse and three cows, during the winter, so he decided to sell one of the cows to the Shelby boys if he could. As a good many other improvident farmers had cows for sale at the same time, because they had not enough corn to feed them, the price of cows was very small. For that matter the price of everything was very small at that time if payment was made in money, because money was exceedingly scarce in consequence of the panic of the year before. Most of the paper money that had been in circulation before that time had become entirely worthless because of the failure of the banks that had issued it, and so very nearly the only good money left in that part of the country was a small supply of Spanish silver dollars, half dollars, quarter dollars and some smaller pieces called "bits" and "fips."

The farmer drove his cow a dozen miles and offered her to the boys for three dollars. As she had recently had a calf, and as she was obviously a

good milker, though considerably underfed, Cate promptly bought her, saying to his brothers: "We'll feed her up and easily double her milk. If we don't get a good deal more than three dollars worth of milk and butter from her, we'll *eat her.*"

Cate meant that merely as a strong way of putting the case, but Kab answered:

"We'll do just that. She's worth the money as so much beef. But I don't think we'll have to eat her. Poor beast she hasn't had half a chance. She hasn't had half enough to eat, and she's had to live out doors in all sorts of weather. Tell you what, boys; if you two will go over to Captain Lambert's with the wagon and cut half a load of corn, bringing it back on the stalks, Mr. O'Reilly and I will knock up a shelter for Molly—that's to be her name. That'll be enough corn and fodder to last her till it's time to cut the crop—and we'll charge it against ourselves as so much paid in advance. So, Molly, You're a good old girl but we'll put something softer than ribs under that skin of yours pretty soon."

It was a fixed rule of the boys to give the whole of the regular working day to the clearing of land, and to attend to all other jobs of evenings and in the early mornings. So on that night there was enough for all to do. Fortunately there was

bright moon, by the light of which Pike and Cate cut the corn needed and brought it home in the wagon, while Kab and O'Reilly milked the cow and built a comfortable shelter for her. It was after ten o'clock when all was done, and for boys who had chopped trees all day, ten o'clock was a late bed time.

But the next evening was freer and fortunately it was cloudy and dark. So Pike summoned the whole party to accompany him on a 'coon and 'possum hunt. Kab felt that he really ought to stay at home and work on his chairs and other comfort-making devices, but as he very greatly wanted to join in the sport he easily yielded to Pike's persuasions.

It was decided to take only one of the dogs—Nemo—to do the hunting. For one thing Nemo was an experienced 'coon hunter, and could be depended upon, as not many dogs can in that sort of sport. He never made the mistake of following a back track. That is to say, when, with his acute sense of smell, he discovered the track of a 'coon or 'possum, he was quick to find out which way the animal was going. Less experienced dogs were apt to make mistakes in that respect, and follow the track in the wrong direction, thus spoiling the sport.

"It is a very curious thing," said Pike, "how a

dog does that. He smells the track of a 'coon or a 'possum, and even that is strange, for the smell is so slight that only a dog can discover it at all. I've tried it many a time. I've found the fresh prints of the animal's feet, and put my nose down close to them without being able to discover even the smallest scent."

"Of course it's different in the case of a deer," said Kab. "A deer's foot is perfumed as strongly as any young girl's handkerchief, and it leaves its scent wherever it plants a foot. I've known girls to keep a deer's foot in a bureau drawer for the sake of its perfume in among the clothes."

"Well," answered Pike, "I didn't know that, but I know that neither a 'coon nor a 'possum has any odor on its feet that my nose can detect. I've smelt of their feet many a time, without discovering any sort of odor at all. But as I was saying, a good 'coon dog finds the track easily, and follows it faster than the 'coon or 'possum can run. But that isn't the most wonderful part of it. When Nemo strikes a track he follows it backward and forward for only six or eight feet before he knows which way the animal that made it was going. I suppose he does it by finding out in which direction the scent grows stronger and fresher and in which direction it grows weaker. But as it takes the

animal only half a second or so to run eight or ten feet, the difference in the freshness of the smell, within that distance must be so very small that I should think it would amount to nothing, even to the keen nose of a dog."

"Pike you plaze me, moightly," interjected the schoolmaster at this point in the conversation."

"How's that, Mr. O'Reilly?" asked the boy with a pleased note in his voice.

"Why you observe closely, and you think clearly about what you observe. Few people do ayther of those things. Keep it up, me boy! Cultivate and strengthen those habits of moind and it'll be strange indeed if ye don't make a great big mark in the world."

The schoolmaster's praise always embarrassed Pike, who was a modest boy, and so he warded it off by saying:

"There's another thing about Nemo that I like."

"What's that?" asked one of the others.

"Why, he never lies."

"Does any dog do that?" asked O'Reilly. "I'd like it if you'd tell me what ye mean, Poike."

"Why many dogs lie when they're hunting. They know they're expected to find the track of game, and if luck goes against them, so that they find no tracks, they try to excuse themselves by

pretending. They begin yelping and running along with their noses to the ground, just as if they were following a hot track. Presently they run to a tree, and give the bark that means that the game is up that tree. When you cut the tree down and find that your dog has been pretending and that there is no game there, you must give the dog a good flogging. It's the only way to cure a dog of lying."

"That is very interesting as a revelation of animal intelligence," said the schoolmaster, "and still more so as a proof of a dumb animal's possession of a moral character which is capable of vice and untruth on the one hand, and of improvement and reformation by means of education on the other."

"Anyhow," said Pike, "one dog is enough when you go 'coon hunting. In fact one is better than two, for if you have two they confuse each other."

"There's a better reason than that," said Cate, "for not taking the other dogs with us."

"What's that?" asked Pike.

"Why the others will be needed here as watch dogs. If we're all going off into the woods and leave our horses and our things here, we'll need to leave Caesar and Pompey to guard them. Those threatening letters might mean something you know."

Just as the darkness fell the party started off into

the woodlands, accompanied by Nemo, but leaving the other savage dogs behind. They carried with them two axes, the tin lantern with an unlighted candle in it, and one "comb" of matches, with which to light the candle in case of need.

They had not gone far into the woods before Nemo, who was running about in circles ahead of them, and with his nose held close to the ground, suddenly uttered one bark, after which he ran back and forth in the darkness whining in an anxious way. Instantly Pike halted the party and bade them keep still. A few moments later Nemo,—whose movements could be discovered only by the sounds he emitted in the pitchy darkness of the woodland—started off at a rapid pace, uttering a single bark about once in every twenty seconds. That bark was meant to let the boys know which way he was going, and it was repeated just often enough to serve that purpose without over alarming the game. Pike called to him encouragingly, now and then, to let him know in his turn that the huntsmen were following him.

Suddenly Nemo uttered half a dozen yelps in rapid succession and in a tone quite different from that which he had used before.

"Come on quick, boys!" eagerly exclaimed Pike; "he's treed his game."

It was so, indeed. Hurrying forward, the boys came upon the dog who was frantically barking, while trying, apparently to climb the tree around whose roots he was dancing in uncontrollable excitement.

“ Strike a light, Kab, and start a little fire to see by,” commanded Pike whom all recognized as the head huntsman, by virtue of his superior experience. For Pike had been passionately fond of the chase from early childhood, and his father, who shared that passion, had taken him with him in all his hunting excursions, by night and by day, ever since the little fellow had been six years old.

As soon as a little brushfire gave light enough to see by, Pike minutely examined the tree. Then, in a thoroughly satisfied voice he called out:

“ It’s all right, boys. We’ll cut it down. The ‘coon’s up there safe enough.”

“ How do ye know that, Poike?” queried the schoolmaster, as Kab and Cate began plying their axes. “ Could you see the baste?”

“ No. But I saw that there’s a hole in the tree up there at the second fork, and the ‘coon’s in there. You see when a coon is chased by a dog he hurries to some tree that has a hole in it, if there’s time enough. I suppose the ‘coons know every tree in the neighborhood and know which of them have holes

in them and which have not. Anyhow, they always run up a tree that has a hole in it if they have time. If the dog is too close upon their heels for that they run up any tree. But when they run up a tree that hasn't any hole in it, they are apt to jump over into another one and get off in that way. That's why I looked for the hole up there, and when I saw it I knew that Mr. 'coon was snugly hidden in it. Look out! Stand back! The tree's going to fall."

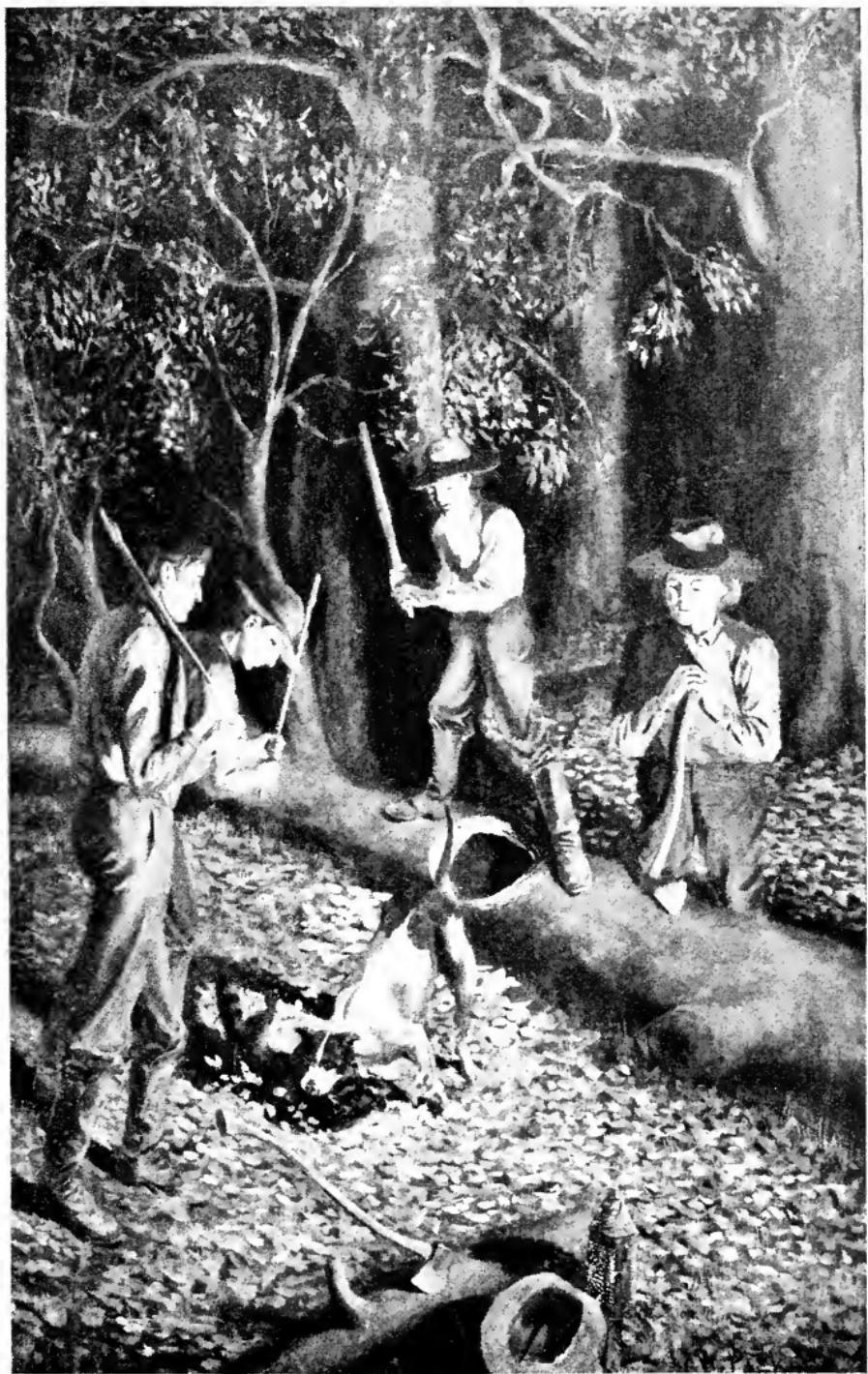
With that Pike seized Nemo, who was quivering with eagerness to get at his prey, and dragging him out of the way, held him till the tree fell. As it did so, the dog broke from his grasp, leaped upon the fallen trunk and hurriedly followed along it till he reached the hole. Yelping with delight he thrust his nose into the hole with loud snortings and continual yelpings. But the hole was not large enough to admit his body, and the 'coon was too far from the entrance for him to reach it.

Pike again seized the dog and held him back while one of the other boys, with a few, well directed blows of an ax enlarged the opening to the hollow of the tree. Then the dog, released, pushed himself into the hollow.

There was a violent squawking, like nothing so much as that of a score of hens, all caught at once by some midnight marauder of the roost. An instant

later Nemo backed out of the hole, dragging the 'coon with him, and for a minute more the two fierce animals fought like demons. The boys would have helped Nemo in the struggle if they could have done so, but as he and the 'coon fought, rolling over each other and scattering the leaves about, the boys saw that any attempt of theirs to help Nemo by striking his quarry with clubs, would be as likely to result in hurting as in helping him. But Nemo was an old and experienced "hand" at this business, and after a minute of fierce fighting he managed to seize the 'coon by the back of his head, crushing the animal's skull between his vise-like jaws. After that one decisive act, the dog relinquished his hold and leaped upon Pike, wagging his tail and whining his delight as a conqueror. He knew what had happened. He knew that that 'coon would never bite or scratch or struggle or even breathe again. Nemo had done his work, and now he wanted his reward of recognition in the shape of a petting from Pike.

The boy gave him what he seemed to ask for. Then he took the dog to the little fire and closely examined him, to see if he had been injured in the fight. There were a few scratches and one considerable bite visible, but Nemo didn't seem to mind these small casualties, and Pike was glad to discover



The boys would have helped Nemo in the struggle if they could have done so.—*Page 212.*



that he had not been injured in any more serious fashion.

"Sometimes," he explained to the schoolmaster, who had never been engaged in 'coon hunting before, "sometimes a dog gets very badly torn to pieces in such a fight as that, and sometimes a 'coon actually kills a dog. That happens if he gets a throat hold."

Extinguishing the fire, the boys set off in search of further game. Two more 'coons were caught very much in the same way that the first had been captured, but with less fierce fighting. Then Nemo found something else, followed it and treed it in a little sapling not over fifteen feet high and so small in girth that it could be easily bent to the ground. Upon striking a light the boys saw that the quarry was a large, fat 'possum. It lay upon a limb of the sapling less than ten feet from the ground.

"Hold Nemo, Cate," said Pike eagerly, "and we'll catch this fellow alive."

Cate seized the dog, calling upon Kab to help him, for the instinct of the chase and of killing was so strong in the powerful animal that it required a good deal of wisely applied force to restrain him when game lay within his sight. As soon as Nemo was secured, Pike gave the young tree a vigorous shake, and the 'possum instantly fell to the ground. The

schoolmaster, as he afterward said, "looked to see the baste jump up and run away." That was only because the schoolmaster had had no experience in 'possum hunting. Instead of running away, "the baste," curled himself up and lay still on his back, pretending to be dead. Pike turned him over two or three times, saying:

"I tell you, boys, he's a big one and as fat as butter. There's a lot of candle stuff inside his skin."

The more Pike handled the creature the more profoundly dead he pretended to be. Presently Pike cut a pole and trimmed it. Then, with a blow of the ax, he made a split in the middle of the stick, taking care not to let the opening extend to either end of it. Holding this split open with the ax he asked the schoolmaster to slip the creature's tail into it.

"He won't bite you," said Pike, reassuringly, upon seeing that O'Reilly hesitated to touch the animal. "He's possuming now, and he'll keep it up as long as he thinks he's fooling us."

The schoolmaster slipped the 'possum's tail through the slit in the pole, and Pike, withdrawing the ax, let the sides of the opening close together firmly, thus securely grasping the tail.

"Now, look out," said the boy as the others picked

up the pole with the animal hanging by its tail between them. "He's quit 'possumming since he felt his tail pinched, and he'll bite savagely if you give him a chance. Take the pole by the ends so that he can't reach you."

"But why not kill the baste, Poike?" asked the schoolmaster.

"Because he'll be better to eat if we take him home alive, pen him up, and feed him for a few days with a little corn. A 'possum is just like a pig about that. He'll get very fat feeding on beechnuts and acorns, but his fat will be soft and oily, while if you give him corn for a few days it becomes firm. There isn't any meat better than a 'possum's, if you feed him on corn for a few days."

"It's a curious habit, that of pretending to be dead when in danger," said the schoolmaster.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Kab. "It's a sort of self-defense I suppose. I have heard that other animals do it sometimes, and we all know that straddle bugs do. You've only to touch one of them to make him turn over on his back and shut up his folding legs, just as if he were dead."

"No," answered Pike; "not just as if he were dead, for when a straddle bug is really dead his legs stick out every way; they are never folded up as they are when he's pretending to be dead."

"That's because a straddle bug that has never been dead, doesn't know how to behave like a dead straddle bug, I suppose," said Cate. "You see he hasn't had any practice in being dead."

"It is a very strange thing at any rate," said the schoolmaster, "and to a reflective mind it has a world of strange significance. It suggests that these creatures, low as they are in the scale of animal life, possess imagination, a faculty of simulation and very great ingenuity. They have understanding enough to perceive that their enemies wish them dead. They have reason enough to argue that if they can make their enemies believe them dead, those enemies will go away and let them alone. They have imagination enough to simulate death most plausibly, by way of escaping danger. It is customary to call all that by the name of instinct. For my part I can see no distinction between such instinct and what in man we call intellect, and I don't believe there is any difference, except in degree. See there now! That 'possum has found out that his ruse of pretending to be dead is of no avail. As it is uncomfortable for him to hang by his tail, head downwards, he has abandoned the useless pretense, and has climbed upon the stick where he can ride more comfortably. I tell ye, boys, the people who

arrogantly assume that intellect is an exclusive possession of mankind, and call all the rest instinct, are very stupid in their observation of the ways of what they call the 'lower animals.' I've known scores of men who haven't half the sound intelligence that Nemo shows every day."

At that moment Nemo justified the schoolmaster's good opinion of him by striking another trail and promptly following it to a big wild cherry tree which stood quite alone in the midst of an open glade or "old Indian field," as the boys had begun to call such open spaces since the schoolmaster had given his conjectural explanation of their origin.

The boys were agreed that it would be a pity to cut down so fine a tree which stood where it was wanted. So Cate volunteered to climb it and dislodge the quarry by shaking each of the limbs violently while Nemo should keep watch below, ready to deal with the animal whenever it should loose its hold and fall to the ground.

Slowly the boy made his way up the tree, vigorously shaking each limb as he went. But no result followed. When at last Cate reached the very top, Kab turned to Pike and said:

"I thought Nemo never lied."

"So did I," said Pike, "and I'm so sure of it that

I'm not going to punish him for lying till I am certain of it."

"What'll you do?"

"I'll cut that tree down, late as it is, and make certain that there's no 'coon or 'possum in it before anybody shall strike Nemo a single blow."

Meanwhile Cate was carelessly making his way down the tree. In doing so he presently slipped from one limb, and fell violently to one below, where he fortunately caught with his hands. As he did so, down came the 'coon, dislodged from a hold that had resisted the previous shaking. Nemo seized and despatched the prey instantly, and Pike, whose sense of justice was very active, turned and said:

"Now take it back, Kab! You see after all that Nemo wasn't lying."

"I make my humble apologies," answered Kab, laughing. "And after all an apology is due, though Nemo is only a dog."

With that the boy went to Nemo and fondled him in a way that doubtless satisfied the sagacious creature of Kab's sincere belief in his integrity.

"Will ye now allow me to suggest, young gentlemen," said the schoolmaster, looking at his big silver watch by the light of the lantern, "that it's well on toward two o'clock in the morning, and that as we

have a hard day's work before us for the morrow we'd better be making our way homeward?"

The hint was accepted, and with their fine supply of game slung over their shoulders, the little company set out to walk to their cabin, half a mile or more away.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Blow of a Black Snake Whip

WHEN Jack Shelby mounted his horse at the miller's and rode away into the night, he did not at all know what he intended to do. He had not made up his mind but he hoped to make it up during the long night ride to Greensburg.

His obvious course, under ordinary circumstances, would have been to go at once to Napoleon, and lay the case before Grimly, the chief deputy United State marshal for that district. Grimly had been charged with the duty of finding out who had committed the mail coach robbery on the National road, and Jack Shelby had in his saddle bags proof positive that Jim Forbes had been engaged in that crime. For how else could he have become possessed of that parcel of newspapers, which had obviously been in the looted mailbags of the coach, on its way to Indianapolis? The one need now was to arrest Forbes, and Grimly alone, so far as Jack Shelby knew, had authority to do that. But Jack Shelby profoundly distrusted Grimly. His distrust had be-

gun at Greensburg on that day when he had asked Grimly's aid in discovering the horse-stealing gang. What the miller and his daughter had told him of Grimly had so far intensified his suspicion that he made up his mind at once not to trust the deputy marshal or to let him know anything of his discovery.

He decided that he would go to Greensburg and consult the sheriff, and perhaps the prosecuting attorney. If the judge had been still alive, Jack's course would have been altogether clear. In that case he would have laid the whole matter before the judge and acted upon whatever advice that wise officer of the law might have given him. But the Judge was dead, and Jack felt himself very uncertain in his mind as to how far it might be safe to accept advice from the sheriff and the prosecuting attorney. The sheriff he knew to be an ignorant, though a well-meaning person. The prosecuting attorney he did not know at all, but he argued that no very strong lawyer could afford to accept the office of prosecuting attorney, with its very meagre salary.

Just as Jack had reached this point in his meditations, three men on horseback confronted him in the darkness, blocking his pathway, while one of them called "Halt."

Jack was completely unarmed, except in so far as

quick wits and courage are arms. Fight, therefore, to which he would have been disposed if he had had anything to fight with, seemed out of the question. But his wits were clear. He could barely make out the forms of the men and their horses in the pitchy darkness of the woodlands with a cloudy sky to intensify it. He could not see their countenances at all, or their clothing or anything else by which they might be identified, then or later. But he recognized Bill Grimly's peculiar, deep, far-reaching voice, as the word "Halt" was given.

Instantly Jack Shelby decided what to do. Captain Lambert's horse was under him and in addition to his nimbleness of foot, that animal was a nervous, impatient creature, unused to endure punishment, and in no way disposed to submit to it. Fortunately Jack Shelby wore spurs and carried a black snake whip, more from habit and in accordance with the customs of the time and country than because of any probable need to urge the sensitive beast he rode to special endeavor.

It was Jack's habit of mind to think quickly and to act quickly upon whatever decisions he might make. In this case he instantly dug his spurs into the flanks of his horse, and as the sensitive creature sprang forward, Jack struck out with his long, supple whip, aiming at the face of the leader of the

trio, whose voice he had recognized as that of Bill Grimly.

The attack was so sudden, and the whip did its work so well, that, as his horse shot forward with the speed of a bullet from a rifle, Jack heard Grimly fall to the ground. An instant later two shots were fired, but in the darkness they did no harm, and half a minute later the maddened horse that Jack Shelby rode, had carried him far beyond range, and beyond hope of successful pursuit.

Jack tried then to slacken his pace but the animal under him was quivering with excitement that would not be controlled. The stroke of the spurs—unused as he was to such punishment—had fairly maddened the high-strung, nervous creature, and the crack of Jack Shelby's whip, though it had not fallen upon the horse, still further stimulated in him the impulse of frantic running away. Jack had nothing to do, therefore, except cling to his horse and keep him to the narrow road. On and on and on the animal sped, until at last he could do no more. He must slow down to get his breath, and as soon as he did so Jack began soothing him with voice and with pattings of the neck, until at last the sensitive creature recognized in his rider a friend who meant no ill to him.

After this Jack was free to think again and he

tried hard to formulate a plan of procedure. But nothing that he could think of completely satisfied him, because he did not know enough of law to know what distinctions there might be between the powers of the state courts and those of the United States court. Mail robberies he knew were offenses against the United States, and so only a United States authority could deal with them. But horse-stealing was an offense against state law, and Jack Shelby had now found out that the same gang which had been doing the horse-stealing had committed the mail-robbery. It seemed to him probable that he might secure arrests for the one offense which would hold the prisoners for the other. Still he did not know, and as he had now certainly discovered that Bill Grimly, Chief Deputy United States Marshal, was at the head of the gang, he did not know whom he might trust. "Who knows?" he asked himself. "If Bill Grimly is the head of the gang who knows who else may belong to it? For anything that I know to the contrary, the prosecuting attorney may be a member of it. I'm very sure the sheriff isn't, but he doesn't know a great deal and any advice from him might carry me astray."

Suddenly it occurred to Jack that there was just one man whose integrity and intelligence he could trust implicitly, and that was his father's boyhood

friend, Captain Lambert. "He will know what to do," Jack reflected, "as well as any lawyer can, and I can trust him absolutely."

He resolved therefore that he would make no decisive move in the matter until he could consult Captain Lambert.

At daylight he reached Greensburg and, as he was utterly exhausted with day and night riding and still more with the mental strain of the situation, he went at once to the tavern, saw his horse fed and curried, and went to bed.

During the day he visited the sheriff and in a guarded way told him what had happened. That officer wanted to swear out warrants at once and set to work making arrests. But Jack persuaded him to wait, lest in the conflict between Federal and State authority, the chief prisoners might escape by virtue of some knot in the snarl. Jack Shelby's whole soul had by this time become enlisted in the work, and he was bent upon making it thorough. He explained to the sheriff his desire to consult Captain Lambert ,and his arguments proved at once convincing.

"Ef we kin git Captain Lambert with us," said the officer of the law, "we simply can't make no mistake. What Captain Will Lambert says in this here community stands fer a fact. Mum's the word

then, till you've seen him. I'll go with you, an' we'll have a talk with him."

It was nearly night when the two started and it was well after nightfall when they arrived at the Shelby place.

CHAPTER XXVII

Cæsar and Pompey on Duty

WHEN Jack and the sheriff, about nine o'clock at night, rode up to the Shelby place, they received a very prompt and peremptory warning that they were not wanted there. Cæsar and Pompey were on guard, and they did not recognize Jack and the sheriff as acquaintances of theirs, or as persons in any way entitled to their confidence. Jack had made the mistake of not becoming acquainted with his new dogs before leaving home on this trip. Pike had kept them shut up for a little while, lest they should run away in search of their former homes and masters, and Jack had been too busy to visit and coadle them and make them know him. So when he rode up to the place that night the dogs utterly refused to recognize him.

They did not bark much. Dogs that have serious intentions in the way of biting, very rarely do much barking. They simply stood there, growling and confronting the intruders with arched backs, stiffened tails and a very obvious objection to them on general principles.

Jack knew the kind of dogs he was dealing with. He knew that when they gave their warning against intrusion, it was best to heed it. He knew that if he should attempt to dismount, those two dogs standing there with stiffened tails and low growlings would instantly seize him and tear him literally to pieces.

So Jack sat upon his horse and called. He supposed his brothers and the schoolmaster must be somewhere near, and that by calling he could bring them to his rescue. But there was no answer. The place seemed deserted, except for the dogs, and Jack was quick to observe that Nemo was not with them. That meant, as he framed the thought in his mind that "everything Shelby" had left the place.

The night was very cool—almost cold in fact—and so presently Jack proposed to his companion that they should ride down to the spring, build a fire and camp there for the night. But, as we know, the Shelby boys owned a cow now, and her milk had been put into crocks and carefully disposed in the water just below the spring. That milk was Shelby property and the two dogs regarded it as their duty in life to guard and protect all Shelby property against all comers at all hazards and all costs. So when Jack moved down toward the spring, the dogs—abating none of their angry antagonism,—moved

with him, seeming unmistakably to give him notice not to dismount even there.

Jack tried to reason with them but their attitude of mind was utterly unreasonable. They had decided in their own canine intelligence that these two men were not to be permitted to dismount anywhere upon the Shelby premises, and they were in no mood to argue the matter.

Jack tried to placate them. He called them "good dogs," but they accepted the compliment as an approval of their determined defense of the place, and they showed no signs of relaxing that defense. Jack persuasively called them by their names—Cæsar and Pompey—but as he presently remembered, those were new names and the dogs had not yet learned to recognize themselves when called by them. He didn't know what their former masters had called them.

So Jack called again and again for his brothers, shouting first the name of one and then that of another of them, but receiving no response. Early in the night as it was he concluded presently that the boys must be asleep; so he decided to ride back up the hill and rap upon the door of the hut. The dogs permitted him to ride up the hill—they closely accompanying him—but they resolutely refused to let him approach the hut. They took their stand

twenty feet in front of it and fairly dared the intruders to approach nearer. Jack tried riding round the house but that seemed to anger the dogs, and so he gave it up.

He was very tired of the saddle, and as his horse happened to be standing under a low branching buckeye tree, he reached up to a limb and swung himself up to a crotch in the tree. Instantly the two dogs approached the root of the tree, rose upon their hind feet and placed their fore paws against the trunk, as if to say "Now we've got you treed, and whenever the boys come we'll get you."

In the meanwhile Jack's supersensitive horse had moved away from the tree by way of taking his legs out of reach of possible bitings, and Jack was left helpless there in the buckeye, like another Zaccheus.

Again and again he called for his brothers, and again and again there was no answer. Jack could not imagine what had become of the boys, and his efforts to do so resulted simply in making him more and more uneasy on their account. He imagined all sorts of calamities that might have happened to them. Especially he imagined that the men who had sent him the threatening letter, might have killed the whole party or captured them and carried them off. He was in an agony of apprehension, and yet his sense of humor was excited by the

ridiculousness of his own situation. "Here I am" he reflected, "treed by my own dogs within thirty feet or so of my own house and with no prospect of release. It is too ridiculous for anything!"

If his horse had been still under him, he would have ridden away and built a fire somewhere outside of the region that those overfaithful dogs regarded themselves as bound to guard against intrusion. But the horse had taken himself off to the stable and Jack was helpless. Presently he called to the sheriff and asked him to ride under the tree. He thought he might in that way drop down upon the sheriff's crupper, and ride away.

But the dogs objected to this program, and enforced their objection resolutely. They refused to let the sheriff ride anywhere near the tree. So insistent were they that the sheriff saw clearly that any attempt on his part to come to Jack's rescue would result in a savage seizure of his own legs. For the ferocity of the dogs seemed to have increased mightily since they had "treed" their quarry. They were by no means minded to let their game escape them now that they had him up a tree.

The situation was indeed absurd, and Jack could not help seeing the humor of it, but he was very tired and sleepy. He had ridden all the previous night and had passed through an exciting and exhausting

experience. All day his mind had been taxed with problems of great moment, so that now it was weary beyond expression. The one desirable thing in the world seemed to him now to be sleep, and as he sat there astride a limb of the buckeye tree, he had the hardest kind of work to avoid falling asleep and dropping to the ground, a prey to the savage dogs.

He begged the sheriff to talk to him, to keep him awake, but when the sheriff tried to do so the dogs seemed to understand that he was interfering with their game in some way, and so they assailed his legs in a way that compelled him to beat a hurried retreat. He made an effort to go to the stable and lead Jack's horse back to him, but the fierce dogs refused to permit that, and there was nothing for it but for the sheriff at Jack's suggestion, to ride half a mile up the road, leaving Jack to his fate. As the officer of the law had no matches with him, he had no choice, upon dismounting, except to sit down at the root of a tree and shiver in the cold.

Meanwhile Jack kept himself awake by climbing about in the buckeye tree and wondering whether the dogs would recognize him and permit him to come down when morning should come.

Hour after hour passed in that uncomfortable fashion, until at last, to Jack's delight, he heard

Pike's voice chiding Nemo for trying to seize upon the 'possum that the other boys were carrying upon the pole.

He knew then that the boys had merely been hunting and that at last his hour of release had come.

CHAPTER XXVIII

While Jack Slept

CAESAR and Pompey heard Pike's voice as soon as Jack did, but they regarded his coming differently. It meant to them that at last the tardy huntsmen were coming up to help them catch and destroy the game they had treed. They fully expected that the boys would build a fire for the sake of light and cut down the buckeye tree so that they—the dogs—might get at Jack Shelby and make an end of him. They did not comprehend the complexities of human relationship. They had treed the game. It was for the boys to cut the tree down and give them a chance to finish their work. So when they heard Pike's voice they redoubled their yelpings of the kind that such dogs give by way of informing the huntsmen that they have game up a tree. Their excitement was tremendous. They stood on their hind legs and clawed the tree savagely, yelping meanwhile like a pair of demons gone mad.

"Come on!" said Pike excitedly. "They've treed something near the house and we'll finish our night hunt with that."

It was not till they reached the spot that Jack was able to make his voice heard above the demoniacal din of the yelping bloodhounds. When at last Pike heard it and understood that Jack was the game up the tree he fell into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. The situation seemed to him so exquisitely funny that he wanted to roll upon the ground and give free vent to his mirth. But Pike was a tender-hearted boy and he quickly understood that his brother Jack must have gone through an experience that was anything but funny. So he promptly repressed his laughter and tried to call the dogs off, so that Jack might swing himself down to the ground. But the dogs could not at all understand this proceeding. They simply refused to believe that Pike would neglect so good an opportunity to capture big game. They refused to be called off. Kab and Cate tried to help Pike in his effort to control the savage beasts, but Kab and Cate had not yet established relations of intimacy with these dogs. The animals angrily and threateningly refused to recognize their authority and very quickly made the boys understand that it would be dangerous to lay hands upon them.

Pike alone had secured recognition at their hands as their master, and so it fell to Pike to deal with the situation.

"Go into the house, one of you," he called out, "and get a brand from the fire-place and start a fire, so that I can see. Mr. O'Reilly, won't you please seize Nemo and hold him? He knows Jack and he wants to fight the other dogs. It'll be worse when I seize them. He'll think they are fighting me and he'll take my part. Drag him into the house and shut him in."

As soon as there was light to see by, Pike seized one of the new dogs, talking to him all the while, and dragged him unwillingly into the stable. Then he dealt with the other in the same way. When that was done Pike called out: "Now you can come down, Jack," and instantly he fell into convulsions of mirth.

"Forgive me, Jack!" he managed to say at least, "I'm sorry you've had so bad a time, but it is really too funny for anything," and with that he fell again into a fit of laughter.

"Oh that's all right," said Jack. "I've been laughing myself ever since the thing began, for it really is funny when you think of it. So have your laugh out, Pike. I don't mind at all. Say—somebody must go up the road and look for the sheriff. He's alone up there and half frozen I reckon. Hurry, Cate, and find him."

But the sheriff wasn't easy to find. He had gone

well into the woods, selected a tree and sat down by its root. There, in spite of the cold, he had fallen asleep, and as the night was very dark, Cate had a long search before finding him.

When at last the whole party was gathered before a blazing fire in the hut, it was after three o'clock in the morning.

"I say, boys," said Jack as he heavily threw himself into one of the bunks, "I'm completely done up. Don't wake me for breakfast. I simply must have six hours of straightaway sleep. I'll get up when I'm ready to get up."

In another instant the elder brother was sound asleep, and by way of sparing him Pike built a fire out of doors when morning came and the breakfast was cooked and eaten there instead of within the house.

" You're always very considerate of other people Pike," said the schoolmaster, " and it's a very admirable trait of character. There is no manifestation of selfishness so gross or so unlovely as a reckless disregard of the comfort or the welfare of others. I'm beginning to be old enough now to form what I call final opinions, and one of my most fixed final opinions is this, that selfishness lies ultimately at the bottom of every human wrong and every human misery."

"Just how do you mean?" asked Kab. "I'm afraid I don't understand."

"I'll explain it to you then, and ye'll understand easily enough after ye've thought about it a bit. When a man steals another's horse or purse or anything else that is his, he is prompted solely by selfishness. He wants the property himself, and he is selfish enough to take it regardless of the loss he is inflicting upon the rightful owner. That's plain enough, certainly."

"Yes, I see that," said Kab, "but——"

"But you don't see that the loike is true in other cases. I'll explain that, too. Ye've seen men who made their wives and children unhappy, haven't you? Well how did they do it, and why? Such men don't exactly want their families to be unhappy. It is only that in their great selfishness they don't care. They insist upon having their own way in everything, and no man can have everything his own way in this world without making other people unhappy. Every man that tries to do that robs other people of their share. Every such man is at heart a thief though he may never have stolen a piece of property in his life. So, when a woman nags and scolds; she wantonly inflicts suffering upon others in order that her own evil dispositions may be gratified. It runs through everything, I tell you. At

the bottom of all wrong conduct and as the basis of all human suffering, there is selfishness. And on the other hand unselfishness does more than all other things combined to make for human happiness."

"I see what you mean," said Pike, "but it seems to me you're building a very big sermon on a very small text."

"How's that, Poike?"

"Why it doesn't seem to me that I did anything very remarkable in just cooking breakfast out of doors this morning so that Jack might have his sleep out. It wasn't any more trouble to me or to any of the rest of you. I don't see why anybody shouldn't have done that."

"Of course you don't, and that's the marrow of the whole matter. You never do see why you shouldn't keep other people's comfort in mind, and minister to it. But that's only another way of saying that you're a nobly unselfish boy, Poike, and that's what I began by saying. It is in little things mainly that we have opportunity to consider others, and it is in just those little things that your selfish man or woman fails. Now you've noticed that I like my bacon broiled to a crisp, while the rest of the company prefer theirs more lightly cooked. So when you give us broiled bacon for breakfast

you take some trouble to have some of it as I like it and some of it as the others like it, and you pick out for each what you think each likes. Now the world would go on just the same if all the bacon in the world was broiled to a crisp or all of it underdone. The thing in itself is of no consequence, but it is a fact of very great consequence that Poike Shelby has a kindly thought for others in his bosom and takes the trouble to do what he can to serve them. That fact will mean a very great deal to other people, Poike, so long as ye shall live. It'll mean happiness for them and love for you, and love and happiness are very precious things, Poike. It wouldn't bother me at all seriously if I had to eat bacon quite raw I've done that, many's the time; but when I see you keep a slice a little longer in the fire because you know I loike it that way, and when you take pains to see that it doesn't get burned, I say to meself: 'Whenever Poike Shelby comes to have a family of his own to look after, it will be a moighty happy wife and children that have him to think and care for them.' ”

“I'm sure,” said Pike very humbly, and quite as if he had been caught doing something wrong, “I'm sure, Mr. O'Reilly that I'm grateful for your good opinion. I think I see what you mean, and I'll try

always to act upon the principle that it is right to think of other people first."

"Oh, ye'll do that safe enough," said the schoolmaster. "You couldn't do otherwise if ye tried. It's born in ye. It's yer nature. Now it's time for all of you to go to your work—for the fields must be ready when the spring comes, you know. But I'm not going to the woods till after I've had a talk with Jack. I'll stay here, milk the cow, wash up the breakfast things and do whatever else there is to do till Jack gets up. Then I'll get his breakfast for him and we'll have our talk."

"I wish I could hear it," said Pike.

"So do I," echoed the other boys. "I'm curious to know what he found out down there at the Mixter post-office, and what he did, and what he means to do next."

It was Cate who had spoken. Kab promptly added:

"Yes, and I wonder why he brought the sheriff up here with him. That means something."

"He will explain it all, doubtless in due time," answered the schoolmaster. "In the meanwhile the work of preparing your fields for next summer's cultivation must be prosecuted with all possible vigor. By the way, Poike, if ye don't moind, I'll devote myself a bit to the work of dressing yer 'coons and

roasting them in such a manner as to save and secure all the fat. We must begin our school-kaping now almost immejiately."

The boys shouldered their axes and set out for their day's work. O'Reilly washed the breakfast things, milked the cow, strained the milk and set it in crocks to cool in the brook below the spring. Then he skinned and dressed the 'coons, and hung them before the fire in such fashion that all their abundant fat should drip into pans which he set for that purpose. After that he found other ways of making himself useful till Jack awoke.

CHAPTER XXIX

A Hurry Call for the Doctor

WHEN Jack awoke at last and O'Reilly prepared his breakfast, the boy was in no fit condition to go on with the delicate and difficult problem he had in hand. He was physically and mentally exhausted. His need of rest was so obvious that O'Reilly wanted him to go back to bed, but Jack refused to do that, saying :—

“ No, I'm only tired in my head. I'll go out and work with the boys to-day. To-morrow I'll go over and talk with Captain Lambert.”

But when he tried to work he could not. Somehow his arms seemed to have no strength in them, and his legs showed a tendency to give way under him. His head ached too—an experience he had never undergone before,—and after an hour's persistence in his attempt to work, he was fairly forced to give it up and return to the house.

Pike wanted to go with him and look after him, but Jack forbade that, saying :

“ I don't need any looking after. I only want a

little rest. And our work is badly behind already because I've had to be away. We haven't half started our clearing and there's the house to build and the corn to cut and a lot of other things to do. I'll rest for half an hour, and then I'll be with you again."

But half an hour passed, and an hour, and two hours, and still Jack did not appear. The sheriff, meanwhile was working as diligently at the tree-cutting as if he had been a member of the party, and better still he was giving the boys the benefit of his advice as an old pioneer, and saving a waste of work in many ways that helped more than the work of three or four pairs of hands could have done.

It came time at last for some one to go to the house to prepare dinner for the party. Ordinarily that was Pike's task, but on this occasion O'Reilly went in his stead. The boys were beginning to be uneasy about Jack and they had more confidence in O'Reilly's judgment than in their own. They therefore consented to let him go to the house in Pike's stead.

He had not been gone long when he came back with a gruesome report upon his lips.

"Jack's in a fever" he said, "and out of his head. He's talkin' about papers and mail robberies and Glorvinia and Parthenia, and now and then he's engaged in a desperate battle with only his whip for a

weapon against horse-pistols. In brief we must have a physician, and the nearest one is in Greensburg. Poike, I suppose ye'd better be the one to go for him. Ye're loight of weight and the spry young Lambert horse will carry you there quickly. It's me best judgment that we can't have a physician any too quick."

Pike needed no urging. He saddled the horse, mounted and was off within five minutes.

"And the baste will have a chance to show his paces with Poike on top of his back, I'm thinking," said the Irishman as he saw the boy leaning forward and pushing the young horse to his best endeavors.

In the meanwhile the others had come to the house in a mood of vague and helpless helpfulness. Their presence seemed, however, to distress the delirious boy, filling his disordered mind with the thought that the work was being neglected just when it was most pressing. For Jack, in his delirium, was confounding his two duties, and imagining that his own inability to carry on his work of securing the arrest of the robbers, was in some way imperilling the home-making work for his mother and sisters which lay nearest his heart.

The wise schoolmaster therefore advised the others to go back to their work and not to come to the house again even for dinner.

"I'll cook your grub," he said, "and I'll fetch it to you in the woods. And I'll look after Jack till the doctor comes."

And he did look after Jack, somewhat to the neglect of the boys' dinner. He had seen illnesses of this kind before and he knew what to do for his patient. He hung all the kettles there were over the fire and filled them all with water. He brought a rain barrel into the house and filled it with water as hot as he thought the boy could bear. Then he stripped off all of Jack's clothes and gently placed him in the bath.

After that the boy seemed easier and slept. In the meanwhile O'Reilly, guessing that there might be something of importance in them, secured Jack's saddle-bags and placed them for safe-keeping in a cupboard that Kab had built the night before.

In the middle of the afternoon—much sooner than he was expected—Pike returned with the doctor, who laughingly protested that the boy had well-nigh made him kill his horse with hurrying.

"He made it out a life and death case," said the man of medicine after he had examined his patient, "when it's nothing more than a high type of malarial fever. We'll bleed the patient if you don't mind."

This last remark was addressed to O'Reilly who had constituted himself nurse. It was the universal

practice at that time and in that country to make the first attack upon a fever by bleeding the patient, and this the doctor proceeded at once to do. Then he measured out medicines—quinine and calomel, sweet spirits of nitre and some other things,—and gave directions for their use.

Pike was especially anxious that the doctor should remain overnight, as he for some reason feared a severe return of Jack's malady in the morning. When he made a request to that effect, the doctor answered with a question.

"Have you a really good 'coon dog?'"

"Yes," answered Pike. "As good as ever drove a 'coon up a tree."

"Then I'll stay overnight," said the doctor, "if you'll give me a coon hunt. I haven't had one since I went away to attend medical college ten years ago."

"But will it do to leave Jack?" asked Pike, rather piteously.

"Of course it will," answered the doctor. "Jack's all right—or will be in a few days. He'll sleep tonight, if I know what my medicine's for, and O'Reilly will stay by him. You see I know O'Reilly. I've had him nurse patients for me before, and he's a master-hand."

"But isn't Jack in danger? I shouldn't want—"

"Not even a little bit of it. He's all right I tell you. There's nothing the matter with him but a malarial attack, and we'll break that up just as surely as we'll eat breakfast in the morning. He's had a good dose of calomel, and he's to take some oil in the morning, and after that he'll get so much quinine into him in six hours that he couldn't go on having a fever if he tried ever so hard. I'll stay with him till to-morrow afternoon. After that he'll have nothing to do but rest and get well. So you'll take me 'coon hunting to-night, won't you, Pike?"

The boy agreed, though he was tired after the last night's hunt and his experience during the day. Kab and Cate were ready to make another night of it, and so, with Nemo for chief inquisitor, the little party set out soon after dark. They returned about midnight, bringing two 'coons and three 'possums, to contribute fat to their school candle supply.

The next morning found Jack very much better, and when the doctor left in the afternoon he was able to assure the boys that a week's rest and quinine, would restore their brother to full vigor of health.

CHAPTER XXX

Pike's Transaction in Hogs

'As Jack was ill, of course the matters in which the sheriff was interested must wait and so the sheriff returned to Greensburg in company with the doctor.

Jack was not dangerously ill, but the fever, and perhaps the bleeding that had relieved it, had rendered him extremely weak and afflicted him with a lassitude that was the more distressing to him, because Jack Shelby was an exceedingly energetic person. It worried him now that he could not go out and do his share of the work the boys were engaged in. It worried him still more that he could not go on with the task of breaking up that robber gang, but when he tried even to think of his plans of procedure it gave him headache and great weariness.

Several days were passed in this way, and Pike observed that if left alone for a while Jack "got to thinking too much," and worried himself sick again. After consultation with O'Reilly, therefore,

Pike decided to remain at the house so long as Jack's illness should continue.

"There's plenty of little things for ye to do around the house, Poike," said the schoolmaster, "and there's no fear but that ye'll kape yerself busy. On the other hand I can do more of the chopping and splitting and log rolling and the loike than a mere boy like you can; so the work will not suffer for your staying at the house."

It was during this home-staying time that Pike undertook a little enterprise of his own. He said to Jack one morning:

"You're too sick to be bothered, Jack, and I wonder why I mightn't do some things on my own judgment, without bothering you at all?"

"What sort of things, Pike?"

"Oh anything that seems to help along. I might see a chance you know, and it would be a pity to let it slip just because you're too sick and tired to be bothered about it. Why shouldn't I just do what I think you'd do if you were well, and let it go at that?"

"There's no reason why you shouldn't do that, Pike," answered the older boy. "In fact there's every reason why you should. We boys have only one common interest to serve, and I am utterly unfit just now to think of things. So if you see any-

thing to do that you think is for the best, why just go on and do it."

"But what if afterwards it shouldn't turn out to be for the best?"

"Well in that case it would only be a mistake, just such as I might make. Of course we'll make many such. Anyhow, now that I'm knocked out, you boys must take the responsibility and just do the best you can. If you make mistakes I'll never blame you for them. But please, Pike, don't let's talk about things any more. My head aches and I want to go to sleep."

Then Pike went out and talked with the hog drover who was camping for a few hours down near the ford across Clifty creek. A great many hogs were raised in Indiana in those days, and as there were no railroads to haul them to market, it was the custom of certain men to buy up as many as they could of them in the Fall, and drive them to Cincinnati for sale to the pork houses there. Sometimes there would be two or three thousand hogs in a drove, and several young men were hired at very small wages to help in driving them. This gave the young men a pleasant outing experience together with a visit to Cincinnati, which was then the largest city in the West. It wasn't very large, as we reckon cities in our time, but to the simple-minded country

folk of that time it was a world of wonders and strange sights, and the youth who had made the trip to Cincinnati was regarded with admiration as a person who had "traveled." In that respect he stood second only to the still more famous young man who had actually gone down the river on a flat boat, and had seen the well-nigh fabulous wonders of New Orleans.

A large drove of hogs had passed by the Shelby place early that morning, and their owner had rented of the boys—Pike being their representative—the privilege of herding and feeding the swine in a woodland at the corner of their tract of land. Pike had consented to such use of the piece of land, upon the terms offered by the drover—namely the payment of two dollars for the privilege of herding the hogs there, and feeding them for half a day and a night while waiting for the stragglers to come up.

Pike had asked curiously about those stragglers, for down in the river country, where the Shelby boys had always lived, hogs were never driven to market in this way. For the most part every farmer there raised a hundred or two hundred of the animals, killed and cured them himself, and sent the bacon, together with the hay, grain, onions, apples, and the like which his farm produced, to New Orleans on a flat boat.

"Hogs is curious," explained the drover when Pike asked about the stragglers. "You can't edzactly say that when a hog will he will, but you can bet your bottom dollar that when a hog won't he won't and that's the end o' the argyment. When a lot o' hogs is a-bein' drove along this way, some of 'em gits jest awfully tired like. When they does that they jest gives right up an' lays down by the side o' the road. 'Taint no sort o' use to try to make 'em git up an' move along, 'caze they jist won't budge nor stir, no matter what you does to 'em. They're tired an' they're a goin' to rest and that's all about it. But as I was a tellin' you, hogs is curious like. They has ways o' their own an' they sticks to them ways. They likes company, like, an' they don't like to be left by their selves. So when we leave a hog what's got tired an' laid down by the roadside, we know he'll git rested after a while, an' when he does git rested, he jumps up an' hurries on, a tryin' to catch up with the drove. What he wants to do that for, beats me clean out, but he always does. Mebbe he gits it into his head that we's a feedin' the drove somewhere an' thinks he'd like to be in at the feedin' like. Anyhow he's sure to git up an' git along as soon as he's got his restin' spell done. So, knowin' the ways o' hogs like, we always counts on 'em. We stop to feed every now

an' then—that's to say about every other day—an' when we do, the stragglin' ones what's been tired an' got rested, comes dribblin' along in, jest as if they'd a been with the drove all the time."

"Do they all come up at last?" asked Pike.

"No, not all on 'em, but purty much all. You see, as I was a tellin' you hogs is curious like, jes' as some folks is. They has their fancies. Some of 'em can travel faster'n others can, an' them's the fust to come up when we stops to feed. Others is later, like, an' some don't come up at all. That's not because they don't mean to, 'caze a hog always means to foller the drove ef he kin. But it's because he gits tuk up an' put in a pen, by somebody what's sort o' lookin' round fer hogs. Or sometimes it's because a hog takes too long a restin', an' gits lost like, an' can't foller the scent o' the drove. Ef a hog loses the scent o' the drove, he ain't like a dog. He don't go scamperin' round a smellin' an' a lookin' fer it. He jes' gives it up as a bad job an' stays where he is, happy an' contented like. Fact is a hog is always happy an' contented. They fairly beats out every other sort o' critter for that. You've heard folks say, like, 'as independent as a hog on ice—ef he can't stand up he kin lay down.' But did you ever see a hog on ice?"

Pike confessed that he had not had that pleasure.

"Well," explained the drover, "a hog on ice is the helplesstest thing you ever see in all your born days. He can't walk an' he can't stand. His feet ain't made for it. So as soon as he finds he's on ice where he can't walk an' can't stand up, why he jes' does the other thing. He lays down, an' there he'll lay till the crack o' doom, perfectly happy an' contented like, an' jes' as if layin' down on ice was the very one thing he was brung up to do. I've seen 'em do that at Cincinnati, many's the time. When the river's froze over, they drives hogs acrost to the 'stilleries over the river. They makes a cinder path on the ice an' the hogs walks across on that. But when one o' them gits crowded off'n the cinders like an' onto the ice, he jes' lays down as happy an' contented like as ever you see. He don't make no try at all, but jest lays there as if he wasn't carin' for no supper to come, an' goes on a layin' there till somebody comes along an' gives him a boost back onto the cinder path, an' then he walks on as dignified like, as if he hadn't never been a layin' down at all. Now it's jes' that way when a hog loses the scent o' the drove. He takes the position that he's satisfied if other folks is. One place is as good as another for him. He ain't a carin' or a worryin'. But jes' as long as he's got the scent he keeps meanderin' along hopin' may be he'll come to the

drove some day. Sometimes he'll march along that way for mor'n a day or two days, an' then sudtent-like he'll make up his mind that he's lost the gang. When he does that he jes' stops there an' makes the best he can o' the situation."

"So you do lose some of your hogs whenever you take a drove to Cincinnati?" asked Pike.

"Yes—may be one in twenty of 'em—or mebbe one in ten if we are hurryin' as we have been a doin' to-day. There's fifty-one a missin' now, though we ain't been started but two days. I 'low as ten o' them'll jine the drove to-night, an' mebbe two or three more 'll ketch up to-morrer or to-morrer night. That ain't nothin' out'n nigh onto two thousand hogs. It's less'n the expense o' hirin' one extra drover if you reckon in what you've got to pay to git him out 'n the lockup after he gits his money in Cincinnati."

"Well now," said Pike, "we boys are just starting a farm here and in our woods just back there the beechnuts lie three or four inches deep all over the ground, when you push the leaves away and look. I don't like to see them go to waste, and so I want some hogs to eat them. Then we can kill and eat some of the hogs during the winter, and maybe we can manage to keep three or four sows over till spring, and raise their pigs. It'll be a start for us.

Now you've paid me two silver dollars for the privilege of feeding your hogs in that strip of walnut woods just down the road there. How would you like to take back one of the dollars, and give me the right to take up a few of your stragglers when they come by? Would that be a fair bargain? You can limit the number yourself and I won't take a hog more than you say."

"Look a here, young feller," answered the drover, "You're a talkin' business now. Lemme see. A hog's a hog of course, but a hog in Cincinnati and a hog out here in the woods is two things a good deal different. I've bought this drove on the average for about fifty cents apiece. I'll git about three dollars apiece for 'em in Cincinnati, an' that looks like a big profit when you don't 'low for expenses. But you see I've got to hire seven drovers at fifty cents a day apiece, an' I've got to board 'em fer three days at a tavern in Cincinnati an' that costs a lot. Then I've got to sort o' look out for the boys you know an' bring 'em back safe an' sound to their homefolks. That costs more'n you'd think, for when the boys gits to Cincinnati an' gits paid their money, they gits lively like. 'Tain't no harm in partic'ler but they ain't used to city ways, an' one way an' another they gits into trouble. So, seein's I've promised their mammies an' their daddies to bring 'em

home safe, I've got to pay their fines, a dollar here, an' a dollar there an so on, an' it mounts up. Then of course I've got to pay for feedin' all the way 'long the road. Well, to make a long story short you've heard about the darkey haven't you? No? well they was a darkey whitewasher, an' he didn't know nothin' 'bout figgerin' but he liked to let on like, pertendin' he was eddicated, like. So one day a rich feller he axed Sam what he would take to whitewash a wall. Sam he looks at the wall, an' sorter measures it off with his eyes like, an' then he says to himself, like as if he was figgerin' on it, he says, 'eight's an eight, an' eight times eight's an eighty-eight an seven times six is seventy-six—I'll do your job, mister for three dollars an' twenty-five cents.' Now all my figgerin' 'bout hogs an' all the rest of it is jes' like that darkey's figgerin'. You jes' take up any o' my stray hogs, you sees, a goin' by an' turn 'em into your beech woods and welcome. Only you must git 'em outer the road an' into the woods where the beechnuts is fore you kin expect 'em to fergit about the drove an' lose the scent. I ain't a carin' about a few stray hogs, an' you seem to be a good sort o' feller."

"No," said Pike, "I won't take a hog unless you let me pay for it. Here are your two dollars. Feed up there in our woods as long as you like, and next

time you come by with a drove do it again and stop and have supper with us. If you'll take the two dollars and promise to do that I'll manage to pick up a dozen or so of your straggling hogs and set them to eating our beechnuts."

"That's a bargain, boy. Mebbe you'll git two dozen on 'em, I hope you will. But you see generosity an' liberality an' hospitality an' all them things is one thing, an' hard money's another. So I'll take the two dollars back, an' call it a trade. I must be movin' on now."

Thus it happened that within the next forty-eight hours Pike Shelby had twenty-three hogs fattening themselves upon the superabundant supply of Shelby beechnuts.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Schoolmaster's Story

IT was about ten days later when Jack Shelby began to feel his head growing clear again. He was still physically weak, but at last he was able to think, and he had a great deal to think about. The home work was getting on well now, and it was time for Jack to give it the benefit of his direction. He walked out one fine, crisp Fall morning and looked over the work done.

"You'd better begin hewing the house timbers, Kab, as soon as you can," he said. "It will take a good while to get them ready, and we shall want to put up the house about the middle of the winter."

"How long will it take us, Jack?" asked Pike.

"I can't say. The willingness our neighbors have expressed to lend us help now and then will count for a good deal. Captain Lambert says they have already planned to come in a body as soon as we get the timbers ready and help us put up the house. But even after that is done we shall have a good deal of hard work to do, in roofing and finishing, and of course we can't even start to build the chim-

neys till the frost is out of the ground. And before it gets into the ground we've got to sow our wheat, so we've no time to waste."

"Why not sow the wheat now?" queried Pike.
"It's fine weather."

"Yes—much too fine. If we were to sow the wheat now it would sprout at once and grow so much before snow comes that the cold would kill it. We mustn't sow it till later in the Fall. Then it will get a good start, and when the snow covers it, it will root well."

"I should think the snow would kill it," said Pike.

"On the contrary," his brother replied, "snow is always good for grass."

"But wheat isn't grass—is it?" He hesitated before uttering the last two words because for the first time he saw the fact that had never occurred to him before.

"Yes, wheat is only a tall grass, and so is corn. I was wrong when I said that snow is always good for grass. It isn't good for corn, but all the thicker grasses keep green under a blanket of snow, though except for rooting themselves firmly they do not grow much till the snow melts away in the spring. But if we should sow our wheat too early in the Fall it would make so much top growth before the cold weather comes that the cold would kill it. That

happens sometimes when wheat is sowed early or when cold weather is delayed longer than usual."

Another thing that Jack was thinking of now was Pike's education. He realized that this youngest member of the family was a boy of unusual intellectual gifts, and he had made up his mind from the first that the sudden necessity for work which had come upon the family, should not rob Pike of his education. He and the two other boys had already finished the ordinary school course of that time and something more, and while they had intended to do a good deal more in the way of education, they could get on without, if they must. They were already better educated than most even of the professional men of their time and country, so that in any case they would belong as men to such educated class as there was in that region at that early time, where only now and then a school-teacher or a preacher, was a person college bred.

Jack very much wanted to go on with his Latin and some other studies and after a while to study law. Kab was ambitious to study the mathematics, in order that he might some day make an engineer or a ship carpenter of himself, and Cate strongly felt that he had not yet fully mastered the ordinary school studies. He wanted to achieve that much at least.

"We won't give up our hope of these things," Jack had said when the three older boys had talked the matter over before setting out for their pioneer life in the backwoods. "We won't give up our hope of that yet; but we've simply got to make a home for the family. That's our first duty and we'll do that first. If we can manage the other things well and good. If we can't, we can't. But Pike's case is different. He hasn't had even our chance, and we must see that he gets it. For this first year we can't do anything, but after that we must send Pike to school somewhere even if we have to go without clothes in order to do it."

Kab and Cate had fully shared this purpose of their older brother, and now the three were rejoiced that the schoolmaster's coming into their family, and his proposal to keep a night-school for the boys, seemed to open a much shorter way for them than they had dared hope. Jack talked apart with Kab and Cate about it, while he was still "busy getting well" as he put it.

"The thing is a godsend to us," he said, "and in some way we must carry it through. If we have even tolerable success with our farming next summer, we can manage, by pinching a little, to send Pike off to a good school somewhere. The great trouble was that he must lose this year and get out

of the habit of studying. This night-school plan will prevent that, and, as I say, we must carry it through in some way. But we simply can't let Mr. O'Reilly give up his whole winter for nothing but his board."

"And why not, Mr. Jack?" asked the schoolmaster who had overheard, and who now joined in the conference. "It's me own pleasure I'm seeking and I find that pleasure for this year in just staying here with you boys and incidentally exercising my profession by teaching ye a little of evenings."

Suddenly the schoolmaster put aside the half jocular tone in which he usually spoke, and seating himself in front of the three—for Pike was attending to the milking,—proceeded to talk with so great a seriousness that his brogue almost disappeared.

"Let me talk to you boys, now, quite in earnest," he began. "I'm not precisely what you take me to be. I have told you that I'm a journeyman schoolmaster, and I am that. But it is from choice, not of necessity. All my life I have had an income—not large but quite sufficient for all my simple wants. I explained to you once I think that it is my philosophy of life so to limit and restrain my wants that my income shall be adequate to their satisfaction."

Here the schoolmaster paused for a minute or two, as if he had thought of something that it pained him

to speak of, or something that he wanted to speak of only in a way of his own. After a little he resumed :

"Very early in my manhood certain events occurred which changed the plans I had formed for my life. We'll not go into that matter if you please. It is sufficient to say that at the age of five and twenty I abandoned all the plans I had cherished. I adopted a philosophy of contentment which has served me well. I don't preach that philosophy, because I don't believe it is sound or hopeful or helpful for most men. Contentment is paralyzing to the mind. It dwarfs endeavor—and causes the energies to relax their hold upon men. Every man ought to be discontented with things as they are, in order that he may be moved to do his part in making them better. But my case was somewhat out of the common. I no longer had any ambitions. I no longer cared to achieve anything; all this for reasons of my own. So I accepted the palsying philosophy of content, and made up my mind to get what I could of enjoyment out of life in my own fashion. I liked travel and I liked teaching. So I decided to make the teaching pay for the travel, and I became a journeyman schoolmaster. As I tell you, I had from the first a small income quite independent of my own earnings, and of recent years certain events

have considerably increased that income. My wants are simple, as you know. I teach, not because I must, but because I like teaching, and because I like to feel that sometimes I can be helpful to others. Now I had made up my mind before I saw you boys, that I would give up the school I had been teaching. The dear young lady who succeeds me in it has need of the income it yields, and I have not. But after I talked with you boys and learned what your plans were, I thought I should enjoy nothing so much as joining you for a time and leading this wild, free life. When I got to know you better and especially when I learned what stuff Pike is made of, I decided upon the night-school plan and I'm going to carry it out. You've nothing to say about the matter, and you're not going to pay me anything for seeking my own pleasure in my own way. I'll teach you three as much as you like, or as little as you like; but I'm going to teach Pike all I can this year, and after I've given him a good preparation somebody is going to send him off to the East to become a really and highly educated man, as he deserves to be. Now if you don't feel minded to offend and affront and grievously wound me, you'll just let me alone while I take my own course. We'll begin the school tomorrow night."

The boys did not know what to say or how to

say it, in answer to a proposal so generous and one made with so obvious a sincerity. But the schoolmaster relieved them of their embarrassment by starting up suddenly and saying: "Pike is going to take me 'coon hunting for a few hours this evening and we must be off. You'll be fast asleep, the three of you when we get back. So, good night!"

CHAPTER XXXII

Jack Plans a Night Ride

OF course Jack's main interest was centered in things at home, but he had undertaken a public duty in connection with the robber gang and it worried him greatly that he was forced to neglect that undertaking day after day, just at the time when he seemed to have in his possession the almost certain means of fulfilling his overconfident promise to the people. Now that things at home seemed in a promising condition, he was naturally anxious to take personal charge of them. He wanted to be at work with the others upon the task of home making and farm opening which had been the one object of their coming into the wilderness. And well as things were going, he knew that he could make them go very much better, if he could regain his strength and be free to give his entire time and attention to home affairs.

He had found out how much wise direction counts for in the conduct of an enterprise, or rather his brothers had found it out for him and pointed it out to him.

"It's strange" said Kab, "how much more we get done when Jack is here than when he's away. Even now, when he's too weak and sick to swing an ax or do anything else much, he helps more than all the rest of us put together, just by looking on and telling us how to do things."

"It's natural enough," answered Cate. "Jack's a good boss, and I've noticed that when there's a lot of work of different kinds to do, so that one thing seems to get in the way of another, the boss counts far more than a good many workmen."

"That's very true," said O'Reilly. "And do you know that in the conduct of great enterprises it's always recognized. In the shipyards and foundries and factories all over the world, they have plenty of people that know how to work, but very few people that know how to tell other people how to work. They are always on the lookout for a man who knows how to direct the work of others, a man who can wisely make one thing help another, a man who can direct, and organize and coördinate—a man who will make what you call a good 'boss.' I hate that word when applied in that way. A boss is a protuberance, a tumor, something that stands out from the general surface of things. However we'll talk of that another time when we are studying etymology and that sort of thing. What I want to

say now is that in every business that requires that a number of people shall work together for the achievement of a common purpose, the man who has ability to organize and direct the work of others, is immeasurably more valuable than the man who only knows how to do the work set for him to do. They not only give such men authority, but they pay them many times the wage of ordinary workers, though with their hands at least they do no work at all. It's the same way in every sort of work in the world. The captain of a ship never climbs a mast or touches a sail, yet he is paid five times as much both in money and in honor, as any sailor that actually does the work. That's because his services are worth five times as much. The sailors do the work, but the man on the quarter deck makes their work worth while, by telling them how to do it and when to do it, and all the rest of it. He is the man that carries the ship through difficulties, enables her to ride out the storms she encounters, and brings her safe into port at last."

But Jack was growing strong again now, and was planning to go and finish his work with the robbers, so as to free himself for the management of things at home. Captain Lambert came over one morning to tell the boys that his corn was in condition now, and that they might go to work cutting

it as soon as they pleased. It was the custom of thrifty farmers, as soon as their corn was hard enough, to cut down the stalks, with both the ears and the blades on them, and stand them in shocks in the field. Thus shocked, the corn kept perfectly while the stalks and blades retained their substance for use as fodder. When a farmer for any reason could not or did not cut his corn in that way, he simply left it standing in the field till he should be ready, during the winter, to go out and gather the ears and haul them home in wagons. When that plan was followed the fodder dried up so badly as to be well-nigh worthless.

As soon as Captain Lambert reported that the corn was ready for cutting Jack told the boys to set to work at it. He hoped to finish his duties away from home in time to help in digging the potatoes, but at present, even if he had had nothing else to do, he was not strong enough for work in the field.

He had a long talk with Captain Lambert, showing him the newspaper package and telling him of all that had happened on his Mixter trip.

"I suppose," he said, "I'll have to go to Indianapolis."

"What for?" quickly asked Lambert. "I see no necessity for that."

"Why of course I can't trust Bill Grimly. He's

one of the gang—the head of it I suppose—and he wouldn't do a thing——”

“ No and you don't want him to do anything. Do it yourself—you and the sheriff with a posse.”

“ But I didn't think the sheriff could make arrests in connection with the mail robbery. That's a United States affair, and I supposed we must have United States Marshals for that. So I thought of going to Indianapolis to lay the matter before the Marshal for the State.”

“ Not at all necessary,” said Lambert. “ You see the men who robbed the mail stage committed a murder, and that is a State crime. The sheriff can arrest for that—and for the other too, if it were necessary. He can get out warrants and arrest everybody whom he reasonably suspects of having had anything to do with the affair. But that's the smallest part of it. You say Bill Grimly was one of the three who met you in the road that night, halted you, and fired at you? ”

“ Yes. It was he who commanded me to halt, and it was he whom I struck with the whip. I reckon his face shows the mark of my lash even yet.”

“ Then what more do you want? Swear out a warrant and have him arrested for an attempt at highway robbery. At the same time have Jim Forbes arrested on suspicion, and when the law

once gets hold of them, that bundle of papers will do the rest. But the sheriff had better search Forbes's house thoroughly. There may be some other interesting things there."

"Good!" said Jack, springing up in his excitement. "I'll ride to Greensburg to-night and see if we can't have somebody in jail within three days."

"But are you strong enough to stand the ride, Jack? Hadn't you better wait a few days longer?"

"No," answered the boy with enthusiasm. "I'll not wait a day. I'll be off for Greensburg to-night. I shouldn't have been strong enough yet to undertake the long trip to Indianapolis, but I can ride to Greensburg, and I will."

Jack was so impatient indeed, that he would have started at once, if he had deemed that best. But he felt that he must give the boys some last instructions before leaving them on an errand that might detain him for a week or a fortnight or even longer. The boys were two or three miles away in Captain Lambert's corn-field by this time, and they would not return till after sunset. Then again Jack had another reason for waiting till night. He knew how rapidly news travels in a sparsely settled region where everybody knows what everybody else is doing, and he thought it more than likely that Bill Grimly's gang were watching his movements with a

good deal of care about that time. He feared, therefore that if he should be seen going toward Greensburg, the fact might quickly become known to the very people whom he wished to keep in the dark.

He decided therefore to wait until night, and in the end it was rather fortunate that he did so, otherwise he would have missed a visitor who told him something of importance.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Doctor's Revelations

A COUNTRY doctor in those early days was called upon to ride over long distances to attend patients very widely scattered. Dr. Gilham of Greensburg, the physician who had been called to see Jack at the beginning of his illness, was a man of wide repute and popularity, so that his practice extended to even greater distances than did that of country physicians generally. He was in fact the only physician of repute living at that time in that part of Indiana.

About this time he was called to attend a very serious case a good many miles northwest of the Shelby place, and as he was returning he decided to stop with Jack for an hour or so, rest and feed his horse, get his own dinner and hear how the boy was getting on with his recovery.

He rode up just as Jack was about sitting down to a solitary dinner in the absence of his brothers at their corn-cutting.

The dinner was a peculiar one, consisting of just two dishes, both unusual, but both extremely good.

One of them was a sort of stew, made of some of the pigeons, with an abundant gravy. The other was a loaf of hot "new corn" bread. That species of bread was justly accounted a great delicacy. It is wholly unlike any other sort of bread. Especially it is unlike ordinary cornbread, either in appearance or in taste. It is made of half-ripened corn, too hard to be eaten as green corn and not hard enough to be ground in a mill. It must be grated into a sort of moist meal, and this is usually mixed up with hot water and baked. But for the sake of still greater toothsomeness Jack had used hot milk instead of water, and had added two or three eggs to the mixture.

The Doctor seemed especially to enjoy his meal and the hour or two of rest that he allowed himself to take after it was over.

"I am pretty well tired out," he said, throwing himself upon the ground outside the hut, leaning his back against the inviting smoothness of a big beech log, and basking in the autumn sunlight which was soft and warm that day.

"I should think you'd often be so," said Jack.
"Your distances are so great."

"Yes, and this time I haven't had a decent mouthful to eat for two or three days before I sat down to your good dinner to-day. The man I have been at-

tending to-day belongs to the shiftless class and his wife is even worse. Poor woman, I don't wonder, for they are very poor, and she is slowly failing with consumption. Now that her husband has broken his leg, they'll have to go to the poorhouse unless some one comes to their relief. But while I'm very sorry for them and especially for the woman, I don't see why she need be so utterly lacking in cleanliness. Ugh, I wouldn't have touched a morsel of food in that house if I'd had to gnaw bark instead. That's why I was so hungry when I got here."

The doctor paused and half shut his eyes, as if needing sleep. Jack invited him to go indoors for a nap in one of the bunks.

"Thank you, no," he answered. "I'm enjoying every moment here in the sunshine and the delicious Indian Summer air. As I was saying, this trip over there to set that poor fellow's leg came at a particularly bad time for me, for I had been up for two nights before and very busy during the days between."

The doctor paused again, as if meditating. Then he went on:

"The fact is I've been on the go ever since I was here to see you. When I got back to Greensburg from here I found a call for me to go at once

down into an out-of-the-way neck of the woods called Mixter's."

At that name Jack pricked up his ears, but he said nothing. He wanted to listen instead.

"There's a tavern down there, a low-down sort of place with none too good a reputation, and my patient was there, though he don't belong there. He lives over Napoleon way. I reckon you saw him that day you made your speech at Greensburg—Bill Grimly his name is."

Jack Shelby was now sitting bolt upright and listening with almost strained attention. Still he said nothing except to answer with as little appearance of interest as he could assume: "Yes, I remember him. He's chief deputy marshal or something of that sort I think."

"Yes. That's the man and I never want to see a worse patient to treat."

"Has he been very ill?" asked Jack, by way of keeping the doctor talking on the subject.

"Yes—and no. He wasn't ill at all when he first sent for me, but he made himself so pretty soon afterwards. He's better now, however, and I've consented for him to go home next Saturday, if he behaves himself in the meanwhile and don't bring on a relapse."

"But I don't understand," said Jack. "If he wasn't ill when he sent for you, why did he send?"

"He wasn't sick, but he was very badly hurt. Somehow he had received a blow across the face. He said it was done accidentally. He explained that he and Jim Forbes had been riding along a path in the woods of a dark night, and that Jim, in holding a hickory limb out of his own face, had let it fly back—the way people often do you know—so that it struck Grimly rather violently in the eyes. He said it knocked him from his horse, and I can believe that, for when I got there his right shoulder was dislocated. I didn't pay much attention to the story, for it seemed plausible enough, and I had enough to do to set that dislocated shoulder, which had been neglected too long and was very badly swollen. When I got that over with, and he had told me the story of how it all happened—you know people always want to tell a doctor all those things, as if it made any difference to him how it happened when his sole attention is given to the task of remedying the damage—well to come back, he asked me to look at his left eye, which he said was 'hurting him very badly.' I should imagine it was, for it was fearfully inflamed. But as I examined it I saw clearly enough that that story about a released branch having hit him wouldn't hold water any more

than a sieve would. There was a great welt, beginning on his right cheek, extending upward across the bridge of his nose, across his left eye and clear around to the left side of his head far back of his ear. Of course that wasn't made by a tree limb. It was made by something much more flexible—I should say by a wagoner's black snake whip. However I didn't bother about that, if it suited him to tell that clumsy story as to how it happened, that was none of my business. My job was to find out just what damage had been done and what I could do to repair it. At first I thought he would have to lose the eye, but by staying there for twenty-four hours and treating it all the time, I managed to get the inflammation under control. Then I went to see my other patients, promising to return about twenty-four hours later. As I happened to have some long rides to make in the meantime, and as his condition was such when I left him that I knew he could be safely left for a longer time than I had appointed, I did not hurry. But just as I got back to Greensburg after a distant visit and made up my mind to get a few hours' rest before going all the way down to Forbes's tavern again, a young woman came up in a tearing hurry, on a horse that had been ridden pretty nearly to death, to tell me that Bill Grimly was dying and I must come quick. Of course I

knew that his injuries were not of a kind likely to result in sudden death, so I questioned the young woman; but I could get no satisfaction out of her. She had only two ideas in her head. One was that Bill Grimly would certainly die if I didn't ride my horse and myself to death, and the other was that something mysteriously terrible was likely to happen if he did. We doctors get used to that sort of thing, especially on the part of excited young women, and I certainly didn't want to make that long ride with that girl for company. So I told her to go on home and keep the patient quiet, and that I would be there as soon as I could. I thought I could guess what was the matter and my guess was right. As soon as I had made Grimly comfortable on my first visit and left him, he and Forbes had got to drinking, as men of that kind always do when there's anything exciting—a wedding, a corn shucking, an election, a fight or a funeral—and when I got there on my second visit I found Forbes helplessly drunk and Grimly a raving maniac with the vile liquor he had absorbed. The old miller, Mixter, who seems to be a nice sort of old fellow, was there doing his best to manage things, but his daughter was doing a good deal more. She seems to have a cool head and better still, in this case, she has the physical strength of a Kentucky hunter, and she was using both to the best

alvantage. She had chucked Forbes into bed, where he belonged, and seeing that Grimly had torn off all my bandages and was preparing to run amuck, she had stretched him out on his back on the floor by sheer strength, and bound him down with sheets, which she had nailed to the puncheons with eight-penny nails. He was as completely restrained from doing injury to himself or anybody else, as if he had been in a straitjacket, so I left him as he was, while I gave him medicines to control him in a different way. When I got him under the influence of the drugs, I told Parthenia—that's the miller's daughter you know—to take a claw-hammer and draw the nails. Then we got him to bed and I reset the shoulder and dressed the face and eye again. I had to stay there the best part of twenty-four hours before I got things into shape again. You see Forbes's daughter,—Glorviny, I think he calls her,—thought for a while that Parthenia and I were going to dissect Bill Grimly there in the middle of the floor, and when at last we got him into bed, and I dressed his hurts, she collapsed. So I had another patient on my hands. But her case was only one of nerves, so a few little powders reduced it to subjection. I've been down there twice since, and as I told you a while ago, I've got Grimly under control now, chiefly because the whiskey supply has run

out and I've ordered the old miller not to let any more come into the house. I've got to ride down there once more—to-morrow or next day—to say finally whether or not Grimly is fit to go home on Saturday."

Jack was by this time in a state of bewilderment as to what he ought to do or rather as to what he ought to say to the doctor. Otherwise his course was clear. He would go to Greensburg that night, swear out warrants, get the sheriff to organize a posse, and proceed at once to arrest both Grimly and Forbes. But ought he not to tell the doctor of this? Ought he to accept the doctor's confidence and give no confidence in return? He knew the doctor to be a man of high character and great discretion. He knew he could trust him absolutely. He had been assured of that by Captain Lambert, and he felt it for himself. It seemed to him, therefore, that it would be very ungracious for him to make no response to the Doctor's frankness. He sat still for a while meditating. Then he said:

"Your guess was entirely right, Doctor; that welt across Bill Grimly's face was made by a black snake whip. I know for certain, because I dealt the blow myself."

"Yes, I knew that," said the doctor. "That is why I told you about it. You see a doctor finds out

a good many things especially when he has drunken men and men in delirium tremens and especially hysterical young women to deal with. He finds out a good many things, and if he's fairly good at guessing the rest comes easily. Parthenia told me you'd been down there and had started back in the darkness on the night when the 'accident' occurred. Glorviny—when she was at her worst—reproached Parthenia for having let you carry off some papers. Then I talked with the miller and he told me some things. How soon can you get to work now?"

"I'm going to Greensburg to-night, after dark. I had planned that before you came."

"Good! if you'll let me I'll stay over and ride with you. Maybe there'll be some of that 'new corn,' bread left for supper."

"Pike will make a fresh loaf of it," answered Jack. "I look for him every minute now. He's our chief cook you know."

"Very well. I'll stay to supper and we'll ride together after dark. But do you think you've got enough evidence to convict?"

"Plenty, so far as those two are concerned."

"That's all right then. The rest will come easy, when once you've got Bill Grimly in jail, and the other fellows begin to realize the advantage of turning state's evidence. We'll ride to-night. In the

meanwhile it is growing a trifle cool out here, now that the sun is getting low, and if you'll renew your invitation, I think I'll go inside and sleep in one of your bunks for an hour or two. I am really very tired."

CHAPTER XXXIV

An All Night's Work.

IT was after eleven o'clock that night when Jack Shelby and the doctor reached Greensburg, and in that quiet village nine o'clock was the hour at which nearly everybody went to bed. But late as it was, both Jack and the doctor thought it best for Jack to have his conference with the sheriff that night.

"Of course you'll stay at my house, Jack," said the doctor as they rode into the village. "So we'll just go there first and put up our horses. Then you can go to the jail, wake the sheriff, and have your conference with him. In the meanwhile, I'll go to bed, for I'm really almost exhausted. When you're through with the sheriff, you can come to the house and go to bed in the room on the ground floor that I'll show you before we part. I'll leave the front door unlocked, and you can enter without knocking and go to your room. Just turn the key in the door after you come in, please. There's no dog to bother you. A doctor mustn't keep dogs, you know."

Jack had warned the sheriff that he might want to

see him in the middle of the night, and that functionary, who saw all sorts of chances to win glory for himself by aiding Jack's endeavors, had bidden him:

"Come whenever you've a mind to an' you'll be welcome. I ain't got my fambly a livin' in the jail to be disturbed by no knockin'. If I had, they'd be disturbed by a good many other things, I reckon. Anyhow, jest you come when you please, an' I'll git up an' let you in."

The sheriff passed all his nights in the jail, one-half of which had been fitted up for his quarters. He was accustomed to wake easily, so that when Jack knocked he appeared at the door so quickly as almost to startle the boy. He was as eager for action, however, as Jack himself was, and so the late visitor was more than welcome. The sheriff stirred up the embers in the fireplace, threw on a few sticks of wood, and made things comfortable. Then without other light than that of the freshened fire, which was ample, the two consulted.

"Now the first thing," said Jack, "is that you shall know precisely where we stand, what evidence we have to go upon, and what I propose to do."

Jack naturally spoke as if he were the chief in this matter and the sheriff only his deputy. Theoretically and officially, of course, things were just the other way, but practically Jack Shelby was conduct-

ing this affair, and the sheriff was glad enough to put himself under Jack's direction.

"There must be no mistakes made," said Jack, "through any failure to understand, between you and me. I've got a 'case' as you call it, against Bill Grimly and Jim Forbes. In fact I've got two cases, or even three—a case of mail robbing, a case of attempted highway robbery, and a case of murder in the killing of the judge. I know just where we can put our hands on Grimly and Forbes, and our first step must be to arrest them and put them into jail. But you and I know very well that there are others in the gang, and we must get them, too, if we can. Of course Grimly is the brains of the organization, and it will go to pieces as soon as he's in jail. But we must get the rest of them if we can, and especially we must get some one of them to turn state's evidence if we can, and tell all about the gang. I've an idea that Jim Forbes might do that if we go about it in the right way. He's a drunken fellow, at least at times, and drunken fellows are apt to be shaky in their nerves. Perhaps we can scare him into a confession, if we can keep him away from Grimly's influence. Can you manage that?"

"Oh, yes, easy enough. After we git 'em under arrest I'll put Forbes in the south cell an' Grimly in

the north, so they can't possibly be any talkin' between 'em."

"That isn't the most important thing. Can you prevent them from talking together after their arrest and before they reach the jail? That's the time when Grimly, if he gets the chance, will say a dozen or so words to Forbes that will stiffen his backbone."

"Oh, I see," said the sheriff; "well, I'll——"

"This is what we'll do," said Jack interrupting, for he was making the plans and not depending upon the sheriff to do it. "At the very moment of making the arrest, you will take charge of Forbes, and I will take Grimly. You'll have a posse along, of course, and some of them will ride with you and the rest with me. But we'll ride in two separate parties, fifty yards or so apart, so that there'll be no chance for the two prisoners to communicate with each other. You will be in charge, of course, and you must give all the orders; but you must give them in the way I suggest. So get it all in your head now, and don't make any mistake."

Then Jack gave the sheriff an exact account of what he had found out, what evidence he had in possession, what he knew and what he had heard. But he took great care not to mention that the doctor had told him anything, as he did not want to

draw his friend into an affair of the kind. The doctor had to make long and lonely rides, and go into all sorts of houses to minister to the sick, and Jack realized that if any members of the gang should escape his effort to bring them all in, they would seek vengeance, and that if the doctor were known to have aided by giving information, he would be easy prey. So he did not mention the doctor at all, though the doctor, brave man that he was, had not even suggested silence with regard to himself.

"Now the next thing," said Jack, "is to pick out your posse. You and I know that this gang includes men who are not suspected of any such criminal relation. You might easily make the mistake of summoning some such men to serve as your deputies. On that point we must make things absolutely sure. We must have no man with us whom we don't know for certain."

"Yes," answered the sheriff, who was more farsighted than Jack had imagined. "I've thought that all out, an' I've got my men picked. Fust of all there's you an' me, an' 'ceptin' that they mout git wind o' things an have a lot o' fellers to waylay us, you an' me could manage the job all by ourselves. But we won't take no chances. So I've got some other good men on the string. Fust of all there's a Methodis' preacher here what's a stunner. He ain't

afeard o' nothin' an' nobody. He's ridin' a circuit, though he's home to-night, an' he's preached agin' the horse thieves an' the whiskey sellers, an' all the rest of 'em, jes' as if he didn't know they was a settin' in the congregation an' likely to put money into the hat when it's passed around. He don't seem to keer fer nothin' but God an' righteousness. One time he even called out the names o' big sinners, right out in meetin', an' warned them to repent. He tole Jake Higgins he wa'n't a treatin' his wife right, an' he wa'n't a treatin' his children right in not sendin' 'em to school. An' he called Squire Nevins's name right out in meetin' an tole him he didn't want him to put no money into the hat 'cause he got his money by 'stillin' cider an makin' apple-jack, an' so gettin' men to drink an' beat their wives an' neglect their families. I disremember jest what his text was, but 'twas somethin' like 'Bind 'em together in bundles an' burn 'em all in a heap.' An' he made that text tell, you better believe. He said he was a preachin' that day agin' big sinners and specially respectable sinners, an' he named 'em an' he tole 'em that in the sight o' God they was just as low-down an' just as ornary, an' jest as disrespectful as the littlest thief or the meanest burglar, or the worst murderer in all the land. He said God didn't make no distinctions, but intended to 'bind 'em together

and burn them all in a bunch—one not a bit better than another. He's a caution, that preacher is. He's dead set agin' all manner of evil doin', an' you can't scare him no matter what you do. They call him a 'Boanerges;' I don't know what that means, but anyhow he's young, an' strong, an' big, an' active, an' he's ready for any sort o' fight you've a mind to put up, so long as it's a fight again' wrong doin'. So I've got him down on my list as fust man. Then next they's a Christian preacher—what they calls a Campbellite. He's softer 'n soap in his talk, but he's got a lot o' sand in his gizzard, an' he's dead down on all sorts o' law-breakin', an' he's got a power o' fight in him too. He was a baptizin' in the creek a few Sundays ago,—you know the Christians, or Campbellites, or whatever you choose to call 'em, always souses 'em clear under—an' a feller what thinks he's some sort o' fighter, he interrupts the ceremony like, by makin' of unpleasant remarks—sayin of nasty things you might call it. Well, fer a little while, brother Christy,—that's his name, you understand—he stood it as well as he could, tryin' to pay no attention to the low-down remarks. Well the feller what was a makin' o' them low-down remarks, he sort o' made a mistake, like. He thought because the preacher didn't pay no attention, like, that he was afeard. Now, let me tell you he never

made no bigger mistake in his born existence. He kep' it up till 'twan't no use to pretend not to understand him. Then Mr. Christy,—the preacher you know—he gits riled. Leastways I s'pose he was riled, though he didn't show it. He stops, jest in the middle of a baptizin', when he had his man nearly waist deep in the water, an' says, says he, without any ruffle in his voice 'excuse me, brother, while I attend to a solemn an' 'perative duty.' With that he walks out o' the water, marches straight up to his man, seizes him by the nape of the neck, hauls him into the creek, an' baptizes him time after time—but without a sayin' o' the solemn words—till the feller 'fesses up an' promises never to disturb a baptizin' agin. Then he lets him slink away, an' then he returns to his duty an' baptizes the brother what had been a standin' in the creek all the time. That preacher's another I can tie to, an' so I'll summon him on the posse. You see when preachers is got grit they's got the best sort o' grit they is. They're a fightin' for righteousness an' they ain't afeard. You'd think, to hear that Campbellite preacher talk, that butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, but if you could a' seen him duck that feller till he was pretty near drownded you'd know there's fight in him.

"Now with you an' me an' them two preachers,

we've got enough, but Captain Will Lambert's a goin' to be along."

"Captain Lambert? Why, I never thought of asking him to help us."

"No, of course you didn't. But he thought of it hisself, an' a week ago he rode down here an' says to me, says he:

"' Whenever you an' Jack gits ready to act, send for me an' I'll be with you.' He know'd you was a comin' to-night, an' so he sent me word in the afternoon, like, that he'd be here at six o'clock in the mornin', 'ready for duty', he says."

"All right!" exclaimed Jack, rising. "With you and me and your two preachers, and Captain Lambert, we can arrest and hold the whole criminal class of South-Eastern Indiana. Now I'll go and wake up a magistrate and swear out the necessary warrants. By that time it will be six o'clock and so you'd better summon your preachers so that we can make an early start—say at seven. I'll get breakfast at the doctor's and apologize to him for having left his front door unlocked all night."

The sheriff only dimly understood Jack's reference, but he very clearly understood that under Jack Shelby's lead he was about to achieve a triumph as an officer of the law which would make his reelection as sheriff, as often as he might choose to run for that

office, a certainty. So he dismissed sleep from his eyes, put on his outer clothing—for he had sat only in his shirt, drawers and socks while arranging matters with Jack Shelby,—and walked off into the village to wake up the two parsons and engage their services for the expedition. His success was immediate, and so he got more sleep than Jack did, who had to wake up a magistrate, argue the sleep out of his eyes, explain the matter to him, prepare warrants of arrest and a search-warrant, all in due form, and await the slow formality of their execution. But even Jack got an hour or two of sleep, before anybody was astir in the doctor's house.

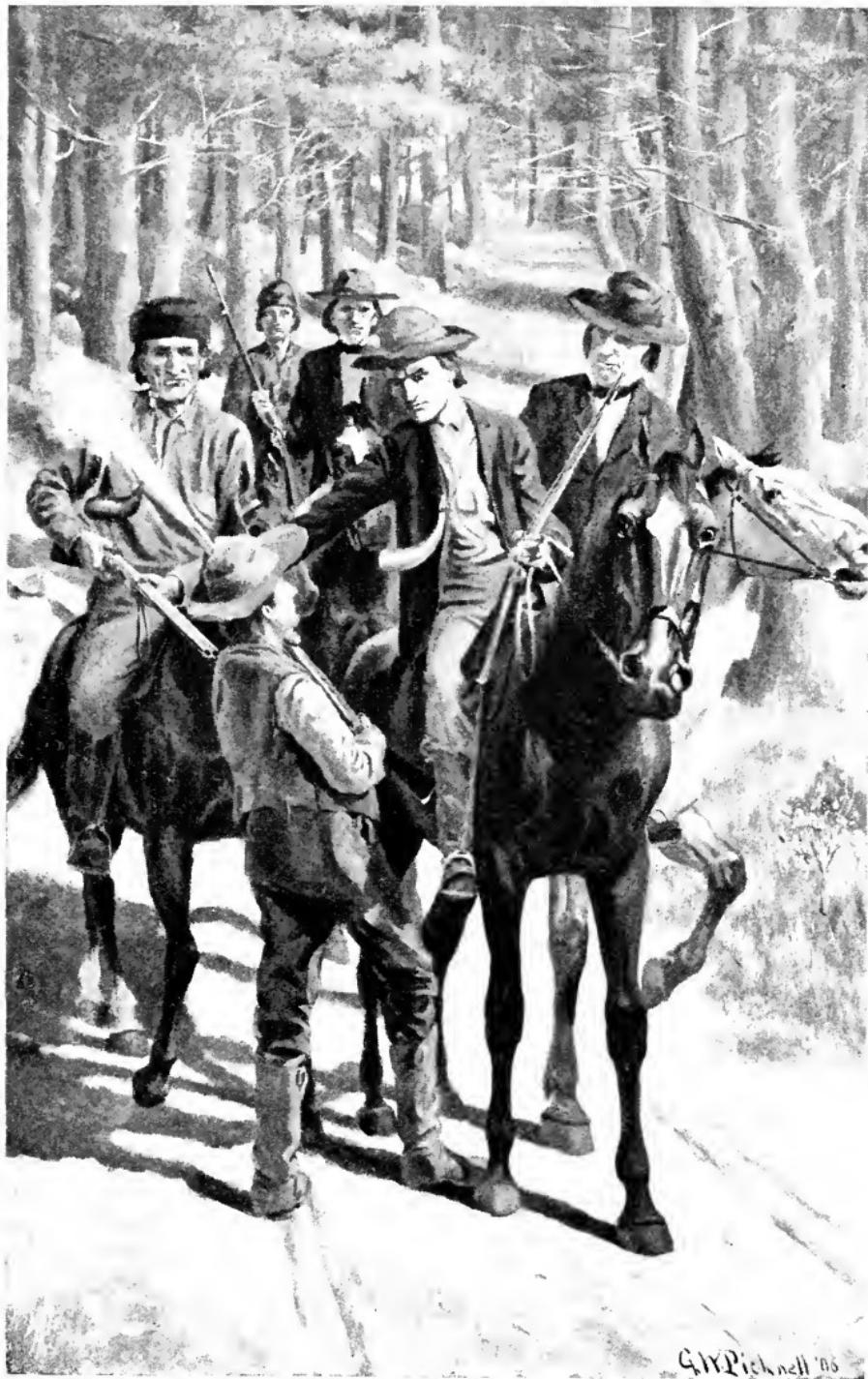
The moment the breakfast was done, Jack mounted, and the little party of five set off for Mixter's.

CHAPTER XXXV

What the Preacher Found

IT was afternoon before the sheriff and his posse reached Jim Forbes's house. When Forbes saw them approaching, he got his gun and went out to meet them. He pretended that he had come out with the gun only to shoot some squirrels, and he said to the party : " I'm sorry, fellers, but I can't put you up to-night as I've got sickness in the house, so I reckon ye'll have to hunt lodgin's somewhere else."

But Jack understood the gun, and Jack was not disposed to take any unnecessary risks in this case. So with a sudden outreaching of his long arm he seized the gun by the barrel, and quickly turned the muzzle upward. As he did so he observed that the gun was cocked—both barrels of it—and it certainly would not have been cocked at all, if Forbes had been merely in search of game. It had evidently been the fellow's purpose to engage the party in conversation, and then, when they were off their guard, to shoot the sheriff and Jack Shelby suddenly and without warning. If he could have done that his chance



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In the very brief struggle that followed, both barrels of the gun went off.—*Page 297.*



would have been good of escaping while the party was in confusion and without a leader. But Jack's sudden act forestalled his murderous intent. In the very brief struggle that followed, both barrels of the gun went off, but whether Forbes fired them in a wild hope of hitting somebody, or whether their discharge was accidental, nobody but Forbes himself could know. However that may have been, the shots flew harmlessly wild, thanks to Jack Shelby's resolute holding of the gun with its muzzle pointed upward.

The moment the barrels went off, Forbes relinquished his hold upon the weapon that was now no longer of use to him. At that instant Captain Lambert, with the alert sagacity of an old soldier, pushed the muzzle of his own double-barreled gun against Forbes's breast and called out:

“Hold up your hands quick or I'll shoot!”

Forbes obeyed, for he knew perfectly that Captain Lambert meant what he said and would do it without a moment's delay. As the hands were thrown up Captain Lambert called out.

“Seize him and disarm him. He has pistols on him somewhere.”

The thing was done instantly, and it was none too soon. For the old soldier had guessed correctly. A pair of huge horse-pistols were found upon the man.

But for Captain Lambert's timely thought and prompt action, Forbes would very certainly have used these with deadly effect.

It was the work of a very few minutes to disarm the fellow and bind his elbows together behind with a surcingle. That done the party hurried on to the house to complete the work by seizing Grimly.

They did not find him there. They found only two shrieking women—Forbes's wife and daughter.—They did not wait to reduce these women to a condition in which they might be questioned, but set out at once to find Grimly. From what the Doctor had told him of Grimly's condition, Jack was certain in his own mind that the man had been in the house when the posse had approached it, and had made his escape during the mêlée with Forbes. As he knew that Grimly was still suffering from the lately dislocated shoulder, and still excessively weak as a consequence of his recent debauch and delirium, he argued that he could not have gone very far away, but must be in hiding somewhere not far from the Forbes house. So taking active command, he briefly explained the situation and hurriedly said :

“ We must search the premises in every direction till we find him. Leave the final search of the house for the last, and hunt everywhere else first. If he's hidden in the house we're sure of catching him

anyhow, but if he's hiding somewhere else about, he might manage to slip away while we're searching the house. So scatter and search the place."

The old miller, with shotgun in hand, had silently joined the party, ready to help. He was not a sworn deputy, of course, but the sheriff accepted his services, as he might have accepted those of any citizen. As the oldest and least active member of the party—he was well over seventy—the sheriff set him to stand guard over Jim Forbes, while the rest should search the place.

The men did their searching thoroughly. They explored the milk-house, but found nothing there less innocent than crocks of milk and dishes of butter. They searched the stable and the barn. They went into the haymow with pitchforks, which they jabbed violently into the hay, at the same time calling out to the hunted man to come out, lest a pitchfork should pierce him. Finding nothing, they went to work with their pitchforks in another way. They opened the large upper doors of the haymow and pitched all the hay—forkful by forkful—to the ground, leaving only bare puncheons where it had rested.

There was no result. Neither in the hay nor in any of the outhouses, nor in the bushes anywhere, could they find the remotest trace of the fugitive.

"Jack, he must have escaped on a horse!" said Captain Lambert.

"No, he didn't," said Jack with confidence. "I know what his condition is. He couldn't have mounted a horse that quick to save his life. Besides I've looked carefully for tracks and I'm certain no horse has left this place since this morning's rain. He is somewhere about, and we simply must find him."

"If you don't mind a settin' somebody else to watch Jim," said the old miller in his habitually unexcited voice, "I'll go over to my place an' bring my little gal here. She'll find him purty quick."

At this the two Forbes women suddenly recovered sufficiently—they had been pretending unconsciousness for a time—to spring to their feet and clamorously protest against the coming of Parthenia. They knew how thorough and minute Parthenia's knowledge of the place was, and of all the persons that could have been suggested, she was the one whose presence they most feared and dreaded now. But the very earnestness of their protest afforded proof that the miller's suggestion was a good one.

"I'll watch the prisoner," said Captain Lambert. "Go after your 'little gal' as quick as you can."

The miller started at once. The moment he had gone, Glorvinia Forbes who had five minutes before

been apparently in a state of hysterical collapse, arose quietly from the chair in which she had been rocking and started to pass into another room, which had two outer doors as everybody present knew. The sheriff instantly stepped in front of her and bade her go back to her chair.

"We ain't a goin' to have no communication a goin' on," he said, as if explaining to Captain Lambert, who smiled and nodded approval. "Under the circumstances it seems to me best, fer the time bein' at least, to put everybody under arrest. I'm sorry to seem imperlite like, to females, but jest fer the present it seems to me you two women folks'll find them two rockin' chairs yer best hold for a rest, like. Captain Lambert, you'll keep 'em here, an' me an the two preachers an' Jack 'll go out an' keep watch in a line, like, all 'round the Forbes settlement, so's nobody what's a hidin' can slip out an' git away."

Within less than half an hour the miller returned, bringing his daughter Parthenia. Instantly Glorvinia set upon the woman with sharp-tongued reproaches.

"It's a purty thing for you to come here this way, Partheny, an' help a lot o' sheriff's people hunt fer your old beau, Bill Grimly, jes because he's been an' give you the sack fer a younger gal."

Glorvinia was sure that this was a home thrust and

in a way it was so. It stung Parthenia to the quick, but its effect was precisely the reverse of that intended. Instead of causing Parthenia to desist from her task of helping to find Grimly, it stimulated her determination. But first she felt it necessary to make a little pin thrust of her own at Glorvinia, by way of revenge. So guessing at the fact that Grimly's name had not before been mentioned, she elevated her eyebrows and held up her hands in surprise, and asked:

"Why is it Bill Grimly they's a lookin' fer? I thought it was a horse thief. I couldn't believe Glorvinia Forbes would be helpin' hide a horse thief, but if it's Bill Grimly that's different, fer when a gal has once so fer forgot her modesty as to throw herself at a man's head, there's no knowin' what she won't do fer him."

Having delivered this stab under the fifth rib, Parthenia felt herself mistress of the situation. Turning to Jack, who had returned to the house to learn what suggestions she had to make, she said:

"Hello, Jack! Howdy do. Glorviny tells me it's Bill Grimly you're a huntin' fer. Have you looked in the well? There's where he most ginerally hides."

Instantly the two women fell into hysterical fits again, but it was of no use. Within five minutes Bill Grimly was dragged up out of the well, where

he had been sitting all this while in a painful position astride the bucket. He was made a prisoner at once, but in consideration of his bandaged shoulder and his condition of nervous collapse as the result of his debauch, he was not tied in any way, except that after he had been placed upon a horse, a cord was fastened to his feet, and they were drawn together under the animal.

That was an hour later, however, for having captured their men it was necessary for Jack and the sheriff to search the house for further evidence, if there should be any, of the complicity of these men with the mail robbery. They found a few more newspapers with a different address on each. These had evidently been taken from the stolen mail-bags, and they strengthened the proof already in hand that Jim Forbes had shared in that affair. But they found nothing in the house to connect Grimly with it, though everybody there was convinced now that he had organized the robbery and acted as its leader. Everybody there hoped for a confession from some of the gang, but at present the only thing that could be proved against Grimly was the attempt at highway robbery in Jack's case.

They finished the search at last, and prepared to start with their prisoners to Greensburg. Just as they were placing Grimly on his horse and tying his

feet together under the animal, he complained of being too warm and asked to have his coat removed. As that was done the soft-voiced preacher who was called a Campbellite, saw Grimly's suspenders hanging down by his sides, for in the wounded condition of his shoulder, he could not wear them in the ordinary way.

Without a moment's hesitation the preacher began unbuttoning and removing these "galluses"—as suspenders were always called in the Hoosier speech. When he had removed them, he looked at them again, as if to confirm his opinion. Then he handed them to the sheriff saying, in his soft, persuasive voice:

"You'd better take care of these. They furnish the evidence we've been looking for."

"How d'ye mean, parson?"

"Why those are silk embroidered suspenders, such as you never saw in these parts before. They constitute a work of art, and my wife embroidered them for the Judge, who was her brother, you know. Bill Grimly took those suspenders from the dead body of the Judge at the time of the mail robbery. We might as well be moving on, now, as it's likely to be midnight by the time we reach Greensburg."

He spoke so quietly and so entirely without excitement in his voice, that for a moment nobody in the

party fully realized how important a discovery he had made. As the full value of it began to dawn upon their minds, the party set up a little cheer, and immediately started for the county seat. The sheriff and Captain Lambert rode in front, with Forbes between them. Jack and the two clergymen brought up the rear, closely guarding Grimly. The miller and his daughter bade them adieu, and then Parthenia said:

“I reckon I’d better go an’ look after Glorviny an’ her ma. They’s a good deal upsot.”

CHAPTER XXXVI

Homeward Bound

AT Greensburg Grimly and Forbes were committed to jail to await the action of the Grand Jury at the next term of court, which would not be held until Spring. In that thinly settled country two terms a year of the circuit court were quite all that were necessary.

The men were held on two charges, namely, complicity in the murder of Judge Moore, and attempted highway robbery in Jack's case, for there was little if any doubt that Forbes was engaged in that with Grimly and some third person. But who that third person might be, it was not easy to guess, though both Jack and the sheriff hoped to find out before the Spring session of the court.

There remained the mail robbery, but as the prisoners were securely held on the other charges under State law, the prosecuting attorney decided to send a special messenger to the Attorney for the

United States, in Indianapolis, and leave him to attend to the matter of securing indictments for the crime against Federal law.

As nothing further could be done as to Grimly and Forbes until the Spring term of court—many months away—Jack welcomed the privilege of going home at once, and carrying on his own affairs, which he felt to be very pressing. But he very greatly wanted to make his work for the public complete, by the discovery and arrest of the other members of Grimly's gang. He knew the people would think he had sufficiently fulfilled his promise by catching Grimly and Forbes and securing adequate proof of their guilt. He knew further that with their leader and his principal lieutenant in jail and certain of going to state prison for a long term, the rest of the gang were likely either to leave the country or at the least to disband and refrain from further misdeeds. But he felt that so long as any of them should remain at large and undiscovered, the region would not be quite safe.

Before starting home, therefore, he spent some hours in the jail, talking with the two prisoners in their widely separated cells, in the hope of securing from one or the other of them some hint of who their associates were.

Grimly was still truculent and boastful, in spite

of the tremulous and unnerved condition in which his debauch had left him.

"Well, Jack Shelby," he began when Jack entered his cell, "what do you want now? You've got me caged, safe enough, but there ain't but one of me. What's the use of coming here to bother me?"

"I thought perhaps you might tell me who the third man was that night when you and Jim Forbes and another man, set upon me in the road."

"Oh, you did, did you? Well you're mistaken. I'll tell you nothing."

"It might be of advantage to you," said Jack.

"Will you set me free if I tell everything I know?"

"I have no authority to do that, and you know it. You're an intelligent man. But listen a minute, Grimly. You know you're safely caught. The evidence against you is complete. Your conviction is just as certain as the rising of the sun itself. But when you're convicted there will be the question of your punishment, and that will rest with the court. Under ordinary circumstances the judge would sentence you for the fullest term allowed by law; but if you were now to repent and tell all you know and thus help the community to break up the gang you organized and led, why naturally the judge would be disposed to give you a shorter term."

"What's the full term for murder?" asked Grimly, with a curiously defiant note in his voice.

"Why death of course," said Jack.

"Well then you might as well go away and spare your breath. Don't you know there's a murder charge against me in this case? And don't you know that if I were to turn state's witness and tell who the others in the band are, every man of them would swear that I and nobody else, had a hand in that part of the business? Do you think I'm going to run my head into a noose like that? No. Maybe you can prove me guilty on the other charges, but—well anyhow I ain't going to make witnesses against myself in the murder case."

Jack saw that there was no hope of any confession or revelation from Grimly. He saw the force of Grimly's reasoning and fully understood, as he had not done at first, that Grimly was the one man of all in the gang who could not on any terms afford to make any statement whatever.

He found Forbes simply sullen and disposed to silence and after an hour's talk with him Jack gave it up and decided to ride home at once.

He very earnestly wanted to be there now and to stay there and to devote himself exclusively to the work of getting a house built, and some stables, and a spring house; he wanted to push the work of

clearing land and getting fields ready for planting in the Spring. That was what he had come into the backwoods to do, and he wanted to be at it. He had no liking for the public work he had been engaged in. It had been forced upon him and he was glad to have done with it. He had plunged into it as we know, only in order to save a life and prevent a lynching, and after all he had accomplished far more than anybody had expected him to accomplish, and he had done it much more speedily than he had dared hope. So he decided to rest satisfied, and with a light heart he turned his face homeward, and his mind to the planning of his work there.

He decided, as he rode along, that he would first of all put the plows into those Indian fields again. They had been very thoroughly broken up by the first plowing, but the soil had lain for so many years in prairie grass sod that the grass roots were deeply imbedded, and just before leaving home on this last journey he had observed that the grass had begun to grow again in the plowed ground with a freedom and vigor that threatened to choke his wheat when he should sow it there. So he decided to plow the ground again and harrow it thoroughly.

This would take about a week or ten days, he

reckoned. It would then be late enough to sow wheat and harrow it in.

So on his way home Jack stopped at a farm near Milford for dinner, and there bought the supply of seed wheat he needed, promising to send his wagon after it when it should be time to do the sowing.

With his mind on these affairs Jack was able to put aside all the disturbing cares and responsibilities that had so greatly wearied him of late. He was growing physically strong again by this time, and now that his mind was again free, he felt almost as if he had grown suddenly younger. He was at any rate more buoyant of spirit.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Glorviny's Visit

JACK turned now with great eagerness to his home-making work. He and Kab pushed the plowing and harrowing with all their might while the others went on with the clearing of land.

At the end of a week, or a little more the little wheat-fields were all sowed. In the meanwhile the boys had dug Captain Lambert's potatoes. They brought home their share of them and a wagon-load or two of apples. The corn, of course they left standing in shocks, until they should need it during the winter. Then they would go with their wagon, pull the shocks apart, husk the corn, and haul it and the fodder to their home place. That, however, could wait, while other matters were more pressing.

When the wheat seeding was over Jack decided that he and Kab—the two who knew how to wield a broad-axe—should set to work hewing the house logs to their squares. Most of these logs had already been hauled in from the woods and the rest could be brought faster than they were needed.

In the meanwhile the evening school was going on well. Jack joined it in order to go on with his Latin, and he was surprised to discover how much more easily and rapidly he could learn it under the wise tuition of O'Reilly, than he had done under his former teacher. That was in part due to the fact that O'Reilly really knew his Latin while the teacher under whom Jack had begun the study had possessed an exceedingly limited and imperfect acquaintance with that language. But it was due far more to the fact that O'Reilly had the rare gift of teaching. He knew just where the difficulties were, and he knew how to help his pupil surmount them. With his queer, half-humorous ways, too, he made all study interesting in a degree that none of the boys had before imagined that it could be.

Kab and Cate took up their studies where they had left them off a year before, while Pike went to work at his books with as much eagerness as if hunting for the answer to a problem in Arithmetic had been hunting for a 'coon, or as if following up a verb through its moods and tenses had been flushing partridges and shooting them on the wing. In truth that was the energetic way in which Pike did everything that he undertook, and it was the real secret of his success in doing well whatever he tried to do at all.

But one evening the school session was interrupted just after it had begun. A bark or two from the dogs, followed by low growls, notified the boys that there was somebody outside the hut, and Jack went out to investigate.

A few yards away from the door he made out the form of a horse, though the night was very dark. Approaching it cautiously, Jack discovered that its rider was a woman, whose voice he recognized when she spoke.

"Good evenin', Jack," she said, "I want ter have a talk with yer."

It was Glorvinia Forbes, and Jack could not imagine why she wanted to talk with him. He had never seen her except on that day of the arrest, and he had never expected to see her again unless she should be summoned as a witness to testify at the trial of her father and Grimly in the Spring. But he realized that she must have made a very long journey, and the instinct of hospitality prompted him to say at once, or as soon as he had quieted the dogs :

"You must be tired and hungry. It's a long ride from Mixter's here. Alright, and come in. I think we've some supper left, and one of my brothers will feed your horse."

With that he called Cate and delivered the horse into his care.

"Come in," he said to the young woman, and she started toward the door. But suddenly she stopped and, hesitating, said:

"They's other folks in there, an' I don't want to see no other folks. Leastways I don't want to talk where they is, bekase it's about—that there."

Jack understood that by "that there" she meant the affair of the arrests, or something connected with it, and his heart gave a sudden bound as the thought occurred to him that perhaps her visit might lead in some way to the completion of his public undertaking and the ultimate arrest or breaking up of the entire gang. It suggested hope at least. He saw that the young woman was greatly agitated, or very apprehensive, or both. Obviously she felt that she was treading upon dangerous ground, and was disposed to step carefully.

"There is nobody here except my brothers and Mr. O'Reilly. You can trust them," said Jack reassuringly.

"I 'low I can't trust nobody. Leastways I won't talk about—that there—where anybody is. I've come all the way here to have a talk with you, Jack Shelby."

"Very well," said Jack. "Come in and have

some supper. After you've eaten—for you must be very hungry,—I'll arrange it so that you can talk with me alone."

The girl still hesitated, but after a little urging, she entered, and, without telling O'Reilly or his brothers who she was—for she had objected even to that—he asked Pike to give her whatever there was in the house to eat. While she was taking her supper Jack turned to O'Reilly and said:

"Mr. O'Reilly, this young lady has ridden a very long way in order to have a conversation with me alone, a very confidential conversation which may involve the dearest interests of other persons. She naturally doesn't want any one but me to hear what she has to tell. Unluckily we have but the one room. Is it too cool for you and the boys to spend an hour outside?"

O'Reilly made no direct answer, but with a courtly bow to the young woman he turned to Pike and said:

"Get your lantern, Poike, and call Nemo, and we'll all go 'coon hunting."

The boys assented and within five minutes Jack Shelby was left alone with Glorvinia Forbes.

"Will you now mind telling me what it is?" he asked at once.

"Mind tellin' you? W'y that's what I come fer.

But 'tain't edzac'ly easy. You see Pop's sick sence he's been in jail."

"Is he?" asked Jack, merely by way of inducing the young woman to go on.

"Yes. He ain't used to bein' in jail, an' it makes him sick like. You know he's got the consumption."

She made that statement precisely as she might have said "You know he's a rather tall man."

"I didn't know that," said Jack.

"Yes, he's got the consumption. Leastways the doctors says it looks like that, an' they says he must live out-of-doors purty much all the time."

"That's rather inconvenient under the circumstances," said Jack. "I don't see how it could be easily arranged."

"It kin ef you's a mind to do it." Suddenly the girl dropped her policy of slow approach and came straight to the object she had in view.

"See here, Jack Shelby, you tolle the folks down there at Greensburg that ef they'd not hang Hi Jenkins you'd git the whole gang, didn't you?"

"I said something of that sort, perhaps," answered Jack, who was not inclined to commit himself till he should learn what the girl wanted.

"Well I 'low you hain't done it yit, an' that's what I come fer—to tell you how."

"Tell me then—I'll be glad to hear."

"Course you will, ef I tell you. But they's somethin' to come fust. You see they's more people in that gang than you think fer, Jack. But you kin git 'em all ef you'll do what I'm a goin' to ask you—leastways all on 'em 'ceptin' them what's already lit out fer Texas."

At that time Texas was not a part of the United States. It was a turbulent little republic largely peopled by lawless Americans and whenever a man anywhere in the West had behaved so badly that he could no longer live in the community, he fled to Texas, or "lit out fer Texas," as Glorvinia put it.

"How many of them are there in all?" asked Jack.

"That's tellin'," the girl answered, "an' I ain't a goin' to tell you nothin' whatusomever, till you make me a promise."

"What is the promise?"

"Will you let Pop go free ef he 'fesses like, an' tells all about the gang an' gives State's evidence?"

"I have no authority to promise that," said Jack, "and I doubt if anybody else has. You see if he were promised freedom in exchange for his testimony, that would be buying his evidence, and so the evidence would be worth nothing. But I'll tell you what I will do. If your father will make a full confession and statement and sign it in writing, and

give it to me, I'll do all I can to get him out of jail and set him free. And even if I fail in that, if I find I can't do it, you know, because the court won't have it so, I can certainly induce the court to let him off with a light sentence. It is the best thing he can do for himself, for if he doesn't do it he will be sent to prison for so long a time that it will be practically the rest of his life."

"That's what I've been a tellin' Pop," said the girl, "an' he's about come round to my way o' thinkin'. But they's difficulties."

"What are they?"

"W'y ef he 'fesses an' then you don't make a clean job of it,—ef you don't git all them pardners o' his'n, some of 'em will kill him as sure as shootin'."

At this point Jack saw an opportunity, and seized it.

"Suppose you tell me now who all the members of the gang are, for of course your father has told you. I'll have every one of them arrested on suspicion, and when they are all in jail, your father need have no fear of them. He can then make his confession."

Evidently the girl had thought of this plan, for she instantly pointed out a difficulty.

"Ef you git 'em arrested, maybe some o' them'll see their chance an' 'fess fust—'fore Pop can."

"That's true," said Jack, reflecting. "But we can arrange that."

"Fix it, d' you mean?"

"Yes, we can fix it perfectly."

"How?"

"You give me the names of all the gang to-night. I'll go with you to Greensburg in the morning, and send out men enough to arrest the last man of them, on suspicion you know. When I've sent the sheriff's men off, we'll have that much sure. Then your father can give me his confession at once, to-morrow. I give you my promise—hard and fast—that I won't use the confession or say anything about it till every man of them is arrested. Then I'll take the confession to the prosecuting attorney and do my best to get him to deal as lightly as possible with your father."

"Will he do it?"

"I am sure he will. In a case like this where one man's State's evidence convicts other men who couldn't have been found out in any other way, the one who gives the evidence is nearly always let off without being tried at all, or if he is tried, he gets hardly any sentence. And I'll do more than that—if I can. Was your father in the mail robbery—actually there?"

"I wouldn't tell ye ef he was," said the girl,

"not till you an' me comes to a agreement. But he wasn't."

"I'm glad of that," said Jack. "Because there will be a murder charge against every one who was engaged in that, and where there's a murder charge the man can't be bailed out. As your father was not in the mail robbery of course there won't be any murder charge against him, and so when he gives me his confession I'll get the prosecuting attorney to go with me to the new judge who has just been appointed, and ask him to let your father out on bail till court time. When I show him the confession and tell him how it has enabled us to catch the whole gang, and explain about your father's health, I am very sure he will consent to let him out on bail."

The girl sat thinking for a while. Then suddenly and in an excited voice as if she were about to fall into hysterics, she broke out:

"Look a here, Jack Shelby, I ain't in no fit condition to argify nothin' an' what's more I ain't got sense 'nuff or larnin' 'nuff. But you seem to be fair an' friendly like, an' ef I can't git nothin' out 'n you I can't git nothin' out 'n nobody. So I'm a goin' to tell you all about it, an' trust you to do your best fer Pop. All I'm a keerin' fer is to save Pop ef I kin, an' I don't keer ef the rest of 'em swings fer it. You see Pop's purty sick, an' that Methodis'

preacher what helped you ketch him, he's been a workin' on Pop's feelin's like tell Pop's skeered 'bout dyin' an' all that. So he sen's fer me to come to him in the jail, an' he tells me all about it an' axes me to see you an' see ef you'll sort o' let up on him ef he'll 'fess to you. Now ef you'll do it, Jack, I'll tell you all about the thing an' then you kin manage it in yer own way."

"I'll do all I can," said Jack. "I can't promise more than that."

"Well then I'll tell you."

And she did. First she gave him a list of the members of the gang, a list she had taken down from her father's lips for the reason that he could not write, except to the extent of signing his name. She told him the details of several crimes that nobody had been able to ferret out. She insisted that her father had wanted and often tried to leave the gang, but that Bill Grimly had prevented by threatening him with death if he tried to withdraw. Finally she told him of the mail robbery, and of how her father happened not to be present on that occasion. It seems that in preparation for that crime Grimly had detailed Forbes and another member of the gang for special purposes. The other member was ordered to take passage on the coach, and at the right moment to give a signal showing that there

were no passengers on board except himself and Judge Moore, or, if there were others, to signal how many of them there were so that Grimly might know whether or not it would be safe to make the attack. Sometimes a considerable number of men, on their way West would take passage together on the stage, and as such men were always armed Grimly did not intend to assail the coach at all if it should happen so on that occasion.

Forbes had been directed to station himself on a lonely and little used woodland road, a mile or two from the scene of the robbery. It was his business to wait there till the gang should come by after the robbery, and throw the mail bags down by the side of the road. They were then to ride on rapidly and scatter over the country, while Forbes was to take the mail-bags into the woods, and carry them by night and over unfrequented paths, to his own tavern, where they could be cut open and robbed at leisure. As Grimly was chief deputy marshal, and would have charge of the work of searching for the robbers and their plunder, there was not the slightest danger that the search would extend to Forbes's tavern.

As there were no such things in those days as postal money orders or registered letters, or express companies, and as few people could use bank checks in a region where banks were very few, there was a

good deal of money carried in the mails at that time. Indeed the little paper money that still remained good after the great panic of 1837, was used almost exclusively in making remittances by mail.

A mail robbery in those days was apt therefore to yield a good deal of money to the robbers, but in this case, the girl said, the result was disappointing.

"They wan't more'n enough money in them bags," she said, "to pay fer the feed o' the horses while the fellers was out a gittin' 'em."

"Did you see them opened?" asked Jack, carelessly, as if the question had had no particular significance.

"You bet I did. You see I wanted them story papers."

"Very well," said Jack, "I'll get your horse now and my own, and we'll go to Greensburg to-night. I'll send off the sheriff's men as soon as possible in the morning. When they are gone, you and I will go to the jail, and take the Methodist preacher with us. He can write down what your father says, and your father can sign it. Then I'll hold it back till the arrests are made."

"But you'll keep your word an' see ef you can't git Pop out 'n jail?"

"Yes—I'll keep my word. But you must keep yours and get your father to tell all he knows,"

After a second or two, Jack added, "but you'll have to do that now."

"How do you mean? S'pose I should change my mind?"

"You won't change your mind, because if you should, I'd be obliged to have you arrested at once."

"Me arrested! What for?"

"For your share in the mail robbery."

"But I wa'n't there. What do you mean, Jack Shelby?"

The girl was up in arms as it were, at this suggestion.

"No," said Jack, "you weren't present when the robbery was committed, but you made yourself a party to it afterwards by being present when the mail-bags were opened and still more by taking a part of the plunder for yourself—the story papers you know."

"But they wasn't o' no use to anybody else then —them as they was sent to couldn't never git 'em nohow."

"All the same," said Jack, "they were part of the mail and when you took them you made yourself just as much a mail robber as if you had taken the bags from the coach with your own hands."

The girl had shrewdness enough to understand this and to see that it must be so. She sat down

heavily in her chair and stared helplessly at Jack. For a moment Jack thought she would fall into a swoon, but he made haste to reassure her.

"I don't think anybody will bother you about that, however, if you keep your promise and get your father's full confession. At any rate I'll do my best for you if you do your best for me. If you don't do that, however, I should be bound to tell of the confession you have made to me. Come, let's be riding."

Jack tacked a note on the shanty door saying:

"I've gone to Greensburg. Don't know when I'll get back.

"JACK"

Then he brought out the horses and the two mounted and rode away into the night.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Promise Fulfilled

ON arriving at Greensburg Jack went at once to the jail and joined the sheriff at breakfast. That officer quickly lost interest in the meal when Jack said to him:

" You'd better send out and get fifteen men for a posse, just as quickly and as quietly as you can. You're going to arrest every man of Bill Grimly's gang who hasn't run away. I've got their names, and I've got information enough to secure warrants for their arrest on suspicion; and before you get them to Greensburg I'll have complete proof against every one of them. But you must act quickly and quietly, or they'll get wind of this, give you the slip and be off for Texas."

Without revealing more than was necessary, and especially without telling of Glorvinia Forbes's night visit to himself, Jack sufficiently explained the situation to convince the sheriff that the great opportunity of his official life had come—one that

would make men remember him as the sheriff who broke up the worst gang ever known in those parts.

As soon as the two had hastily swallowed their breakfast, the sheriff set about collecting his posse. He had to send a few miles out into the country for some of the men he wanted, while the rest were easily secured in the village. By ten o'clock that morning he had a sufficient number present.

In the meanwhile Jack had gone before the newly appointed judge and secured the necessary warrants. These the sheriff distributed among the deputies whom he had appointed to lead the several squads, and the parties started off at once in different directions to make the arrests and bring their prisoners to Greensburg. They were all armed, of course, and they were men on whom the sheriff knew he could rely.

As soon as they had gone Jack called for Glorvinia and the Methodist parson, and the three went together to the jail. There Glorvinia told her father of the arrangement she had made with Jack, and explained to him the necessity of making his confession and signing it at once.

"Ef you let it go over, I 'low some o' the rest 'll git ahead o' you, an' then where'll you be?" she asked impressively. "An' where'll I be?" she added still more impressively.

Jim, who was really weak and seemed positively ill, needed very little persuasion to do as his daughter and the minister advised, and in the course of an hour or two his whole story had been taken down in writing and signed by him in clumsy fashion.

Then the minister invited Glorvinia to remain at his house where she would be near her father and safe from any attempt on the part of friends of the prisoners, to injure her in revenge.

It was not until noon of the next day that the last of the prisoners—two men whose homes were remote from Greensburg—were brought in and lodged in the jail. Then Jack called upon the prosecuting attorney and the judge and told them of Jim Forbes's confession, placing the document in the judge's hands.

As he had promised Glorvinia that he would do, he asked for Forbes's release on bail. That of course could not be done until after the trial of the prisoners, for Forbes might disappear and not give his testimony after all. The judge kindly explained to Jack that while the written confession was sufficient evidence upon which to hold the men for trial, it could not be used as evidence against them at their trials, because under the constitution, they must be confronted with the witnesses against them.

"But this is a very unusual case, and one of the

greatest public interest," the judge continued. "There are more than a dozen men in jail, and the community is naturally and very greatly excited. I think we should not wait for the spring term of the court before having them indicted and tried, and therefore I shall ask the prosecuting attorney to go at once to Indianapolis and ask the authorities there to order a special term of the court to deal with these cases. There is no doubt that they will call such a term at once. In the meanwhile I will direct the sheriff to give Forbes all the liberty he can within the jail precincts, considering him somewhat in the light of a person detained merely as a witness."

When Jack left the judge's house it was his purpose to return home at once, but he found it not very easy to get away. The news of what was going on had spread rapidly through the country and on this second day of the arrests, pretty nearly all the people from many miles around had come to Greensburg. Precisely why they had come, or what for, it would have puzzled them perhaps to say. But for one thing they all wanted to see Jack Shelby, "the young chap what's been too much fer 'em an' has got the whole gang in jail, jes' as he said he would."

So Jack was beset by people who wanted to shake hands with him and tell him what they thought of

his performance, and all the rest of it. As he told the boys when he got home, he didn't know whether they regarded him as a hero, or merely as some new species of animal in a show. Possibly both of those views were entertained. Certain it is that every honest man and woman in that county felt a sense of relief to know that the terror under which they had so long lived, was at an end, and they were not sparing in the gratitude and admiration they felt and expressed, for the young man who had brought it all about. So Jack Shelby had to spend an hour or two shaking hands and talking with the people, before he could mount his horse and gallop away toward home.

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Ten days later the special term of the court, for which the judge had asked, was held at Greensburg. It lasted for more than a week. At the end of that time every member of the gang was convicted. Jim Forbes, in consideration of his having given testimony, was released without trial, but with the indictment still in force against him, as a sort of guarantee of good conduct for the future. As soon as he could sell out his possessions, he quietly removed to the Illinois territory. The rest of the gang

were sent to prison for long terms. Bill Grimly was convicted of murder and sentenced to be hanged. But as it had not been quite certainly proved that he had intended to kill Judge Moore at the outset, the Governor of the State presently commuted his sentence to one of life imprisonment.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The End of the Story

JACK SHELBY was now completely free to stay at home and push the work there with all his might, while O'Reilly made the most of his little night-school. In both the progress made was altogether satisfactory.

Work and school went on throughout the winter. One sharply cold day in December, other work was suspended for hog killing. There were twenty-three of the hogs as we know and the boys decided to kill twelve of them.

"That will provide us with fresh pork for the winter," said Jack, "and hams and bacon for a year to come, and we must, of course, have something in the house to eat when mother and the girls get here. We must make a little smoke-house to cure the bacon in, and we'll manage somehow to feed the sows and keep them over."

The hams, shoulders, and sides of the hogs were made into bacon. The tenderloins, heads, hearts, livers, kidneys and the pieces cut off in shaping the

hams, were put in a cool place to be eaten fresh. Pike thought he knew how to make souse out of the feet, ears and noses. "If I don't," he said, "I can learn. I've seen it done often enough. I'll try, anyhow."

And he did try, with results that were highly approved by the rest of the party.

In the very early spring, or late in the winter, rather, for it was in February, the sap began running in the sugar trees, and the boys set to work at once to harvest the first crop that could yield them any actual money. Their grove of sugar trees was a very large one and the trees were all in their prime, so that the boys managed, by working hard, to make a large crop of "country sugar." Borrowing an additional wagon they hauled this to Cincinnati, and sold it at the high price that maple sugar always commanded in those days when it was pretty nearly the only toothsome bon-bon that people in the cities could buy.

The money return from this first crop was so good indeed, that after it came in, the boys felt themselves quite comfortably independent, so far as ready money was concerned. This set them longing for their mother and sisters to come. They had not expected them until after the wheat should be sold in the Fall, but now that they had a comfortable little

store of money, plenty of meat, two cows—for they had bought another—a considerable growing crop of wheat, a lot of hens with young chickens and a sufficient field cleared for corn, they agreed that they could afford to reunite the family in the early summer, as soon as their mother's school term should end.

The house had already been put up, with the generous assistance of the neighbors, and the boys worked hard to finish it and to build a stable barn at the point Jack had selected. They planted their corn as soon as the frost was out of the ground, and under a constant plowing and hoeing it was in a thriving condition at the beginning of June.

Their garden, too, was by that time so well advanced that it promised a supply of vegetables in time for the family's use.

Then at last the Shelby boys felt that their task was done—so far at least as all absolutely necessary things were concerned. The family could be united now in their new home.

"The wheat will be ready for harvesting about two or three weeks from now, boys," said Jack one evening about the middle of June, "and when it is, we'll all be too busy to spare ourselves from the farm. So I think we'd better go now after mother and the girls."

The proposal was received with delight.

"Who'll go, Jack,—besides you, I mean?" asked Pike.

"You and I will go, Pike. There'll be a good deal to do here while we're gone. The hoeing of the corn must be kept up, or the weeds will get away with us. How they do grow in that rich new soil where the trees never gave them a chance to grow before!"

"Yes, but the corn grows too," said Cate, "and we can keep the weeds down, if we work hard enough, both in the cornfields and in the garden. But Kab and I can manage that fight while you and Pike are gone. We'll move the horses to the new stable, too, and so completely obliterate the old one that mother will hardly know we ever had a stable in her front yard. I'd burn it if I weren't afraid the house would catch fire. How long do you suppose you'll be gone, Jack, you and Pike?"

"About ten days or possibly eight days will be enough. The wagon will be empty as we go, and the furniture won't make a very heavy load as we come back. We'll take all four horses, to make sure of a quick trip. The corn is too high now for plowing—the rest must be done with the hoes. So you'll not have to move the horses to the new stable, Cate; only get it ready for them and destroy the old one

as completely as you can. Pike, suppose you get the wagon ready this evening, so that we can start at sunrise. Tar all the wheels, and put in such cooking things and blankets as we'll need for the trip. I'm going over to Captain Lambert's after supper."

"What for?" asked Pike.

"To borrow that young horse he lent me while I was after that gang."

"What for?"

"For mother to ride on the way home. The girls can ride in the wagon, though I suspect they'll want to walk whenever we're going slow enough, but wagon riding would be tiresome for mother, and besides I want her to come to her new home in some sort of style."

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Seven years later there was a notable home gathering at the Shelby Place, which had become one of the finest and broadest farms in that entire region. The feasting was held to celebrate the home coming of Pike, from the Eastern college from which he had just been graduated. For the schoolmaster's plan had been carried out, though not at the schoolmaster's expense, as he had intended. The boys had prospered from the first in their farming and had

themselves paid Pike's way. It had required some pinching during the first year, but after that the way had been easy enough.

Jack did not live at the Shelby Place now. He had achieved his ambition of making a successful young lawyer of himself, and had served two terms in the Legislature at Indianapolis. Pike was now to enter his office as a law student. Kab and Cate had stuck to the farm and had become prosperous and very influential men in the community. The house had been enlarged until it was now one of the best in all the country side.

The schoolmaster, who was professor of Latin now in the State University, at Bloomington, had made a long journey to be with the Shelby boys on this occasion, and to rejoice with them. Captain Lambert came too, and after the one o'clock dinner was over, he proposed a "whole family" walk over the farm.

As they went, their path led through a peach orchard, and Pike stopped in wonderment, among the fruit laden trees.

"I planted them myself before I went away," he said. "How they have prospered!"

"It runs in the family, Poike," said the schoolmaster.

THE END.

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